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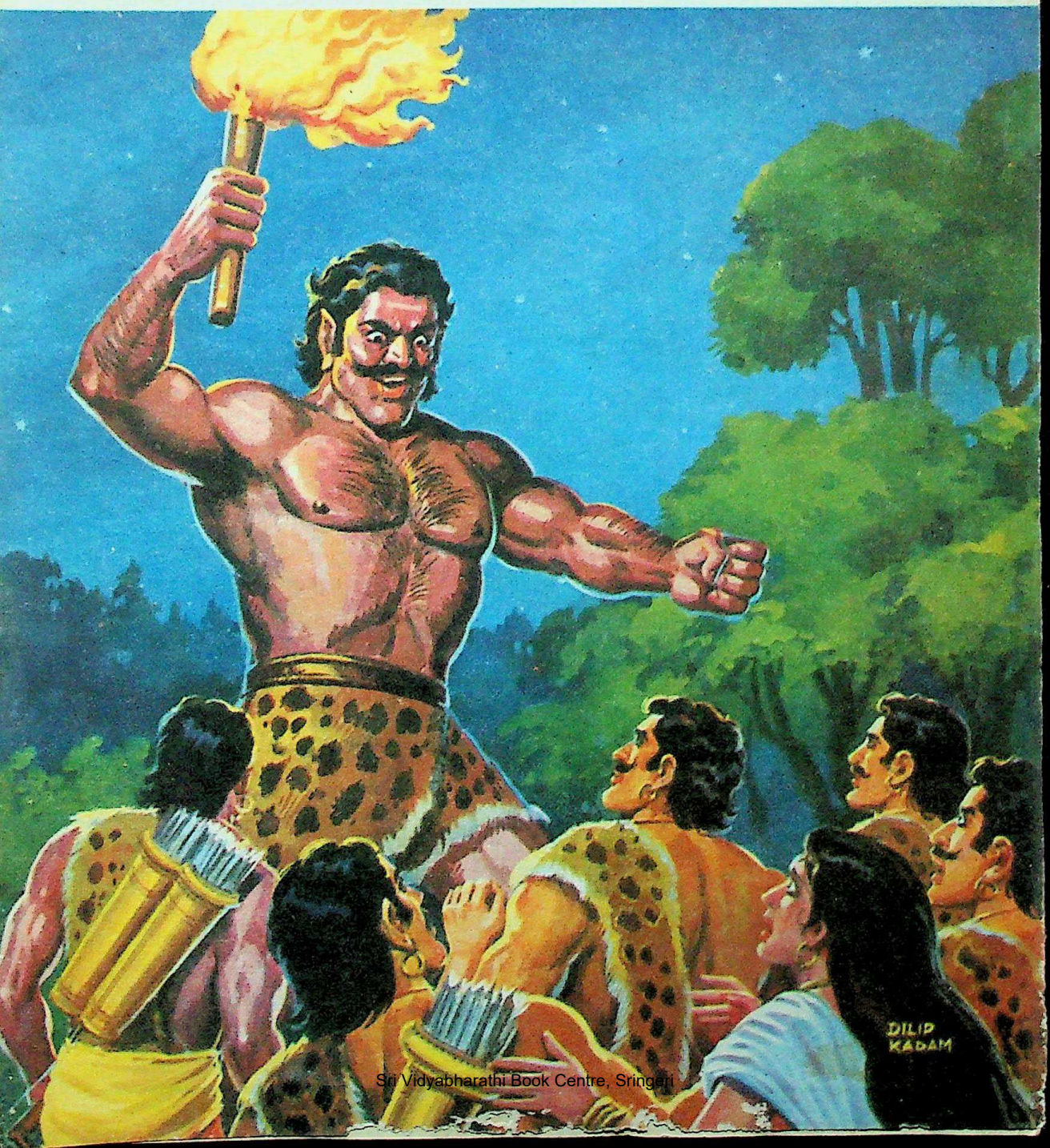
AMAR CHITRA KATHA

No. 365 Rs. 4/-

Mahabharata-19

The Pandavas in the Forest



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Amar Chitra Katha
No.365 September 15, 1986

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AMAR CHITRA KATHA

MAHABHARATA

Veda Vyasa's Epic on the Bharata race was first recited in public by his disciple Vaishampayana at the behest of the ageless seer Vyasa himself.

The recital took place in the august presence of King Janamejaya—great-grandson of Vyasa—and the many learned sages who had assembled for Janamejaya's Sarpa Satra (a 12-year-long snake sacrifice).

The eighteenth session of our presentation of Vaishampayana's recital of Vyasa's Mahabharata narrated how, bound by his Dharma, Yudhishthira consented to gamble, how he was defeated by Shakuni who used foul means at the game of dice and how Duhshasana tried to disrobe Draupadi in the assembly which enraged Bheema to take terrible vows of destroying the Kuru princes in war. Our rendition of this session concluded with the banishment of the Pandavas to the forest for thirteen years.

Revision in Price

Because of the rising cost of paper and printing and the increasing wage bill, we are left with no alternative except to revise the price of Amar Chitra Katha to Rs. 5.00 with effect from the issue No. 366 dated October, 1, 1986. We are sure readers will bear with us. However, with the issue dated October 1, 1986, we will once again use better paper for the cover.

Editor

OUR FORTHCOMING TITLES :

October 1, 1986	October 15, 1986
PATALI—PUTRA	Mahabharata—20 ARJUNA'S QUEST FOR WEAPONS

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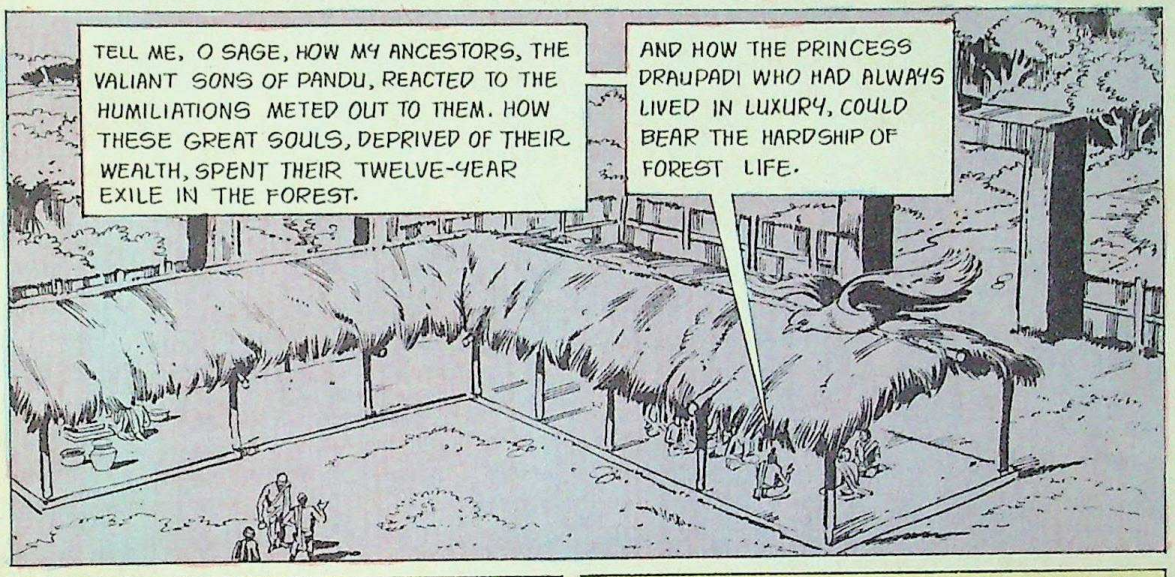
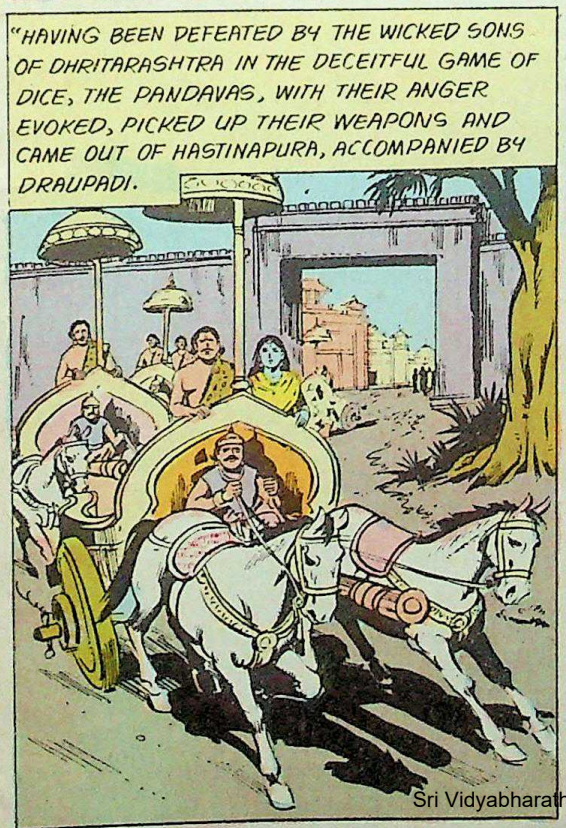
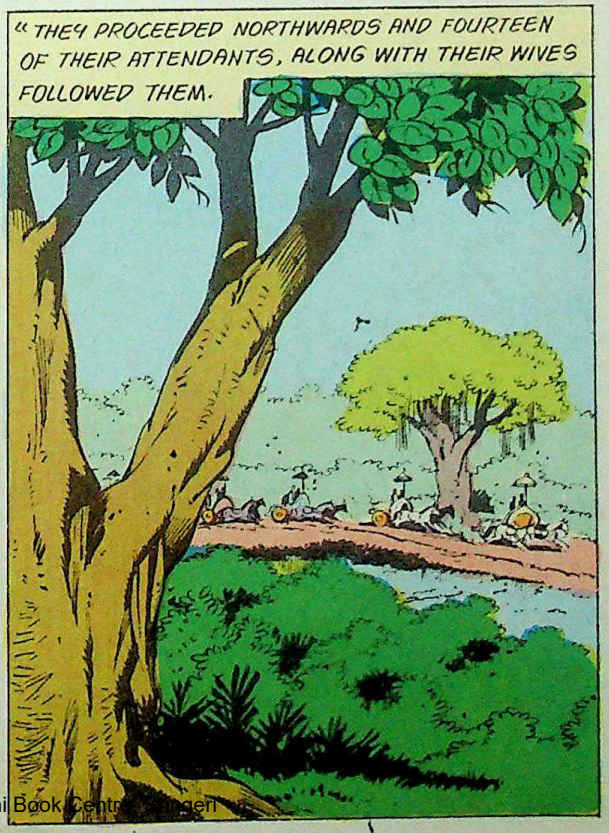
Mahabharata – 19

THE PANDAVAS IN THE FOREST







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"ON HEARING THE FATE OF THE PANDAVAS, THE CITIZENS OF HASTINAPURA CAME OUT OF THEIR HOMES. IN THEIR SORROW AND ANGER, THEY DID NOT SPARE IN THEIR CRITICISM EVEN BHEESHMA, VIDURA, DRONA AND KRIPA.

"AND THEY SAID TO ONE ANOTHER:

THE SINNER DURYODHANA, AIDED BY SHAKUNI AND WITH THE APPROVAL OF KARNA AND DUHSHASANA, WANTS TO RULE OVER US.

SO OUR FAMILIES, OUR HOUSES AND BELONGINGS WILL NO LONGER REMAIN PROTECTED.

WHEN AN EVIL MAN WANTS TO RULE WITH THE HELP OF OTHER EVIL MEN, HOW CAN ONE'S FAMILY HONOUR BE GUARDED? HOW CAN OUR HERITAGE, RELIGION AND HAPPINESS BE PRESERVED?

IT IS CERTAIN THAT UNDER DURYODHANA'S RULE, THE WHOLE WORLD WILL COME TO A SORRY END.

SO LET US ACCOMPANY THE KIND-HEARTED, RIGHTEOUS AND VALOROUS PANDAVAS WHEREVER THEY GO.

"SAYING THIS, THE CITIZENS WENT UP TO THE PANDAVAS AND SAID:

WE ARE DISTRESSED THAT YOU ARE BEING BANISHED FROM YOUR KINGDOM THROUGH THE TREACHERY OF YOUR CRUEL ENEMIES.

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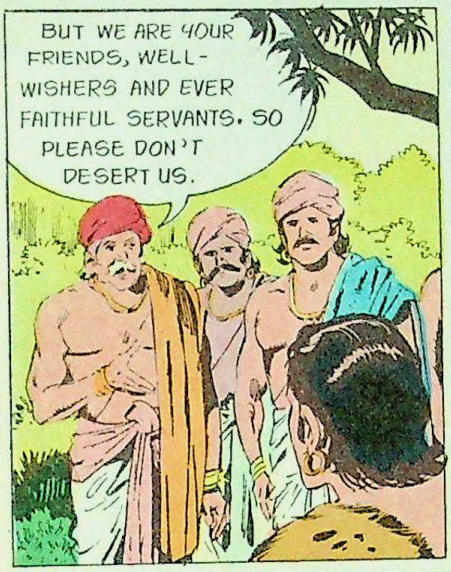

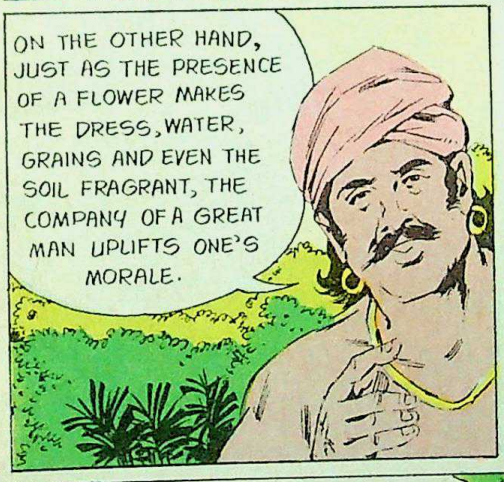

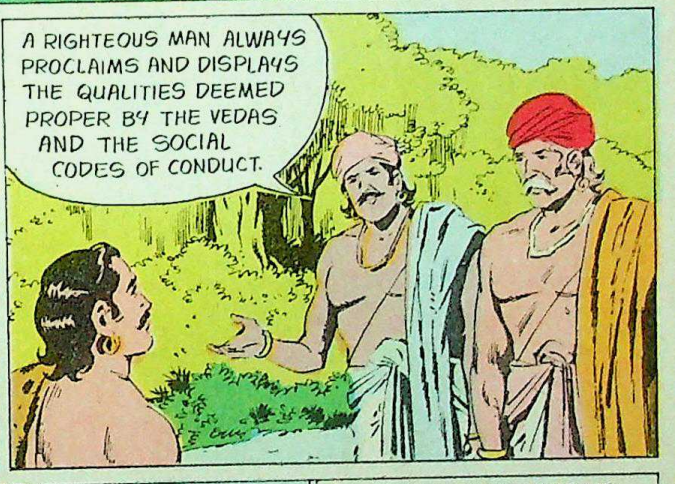

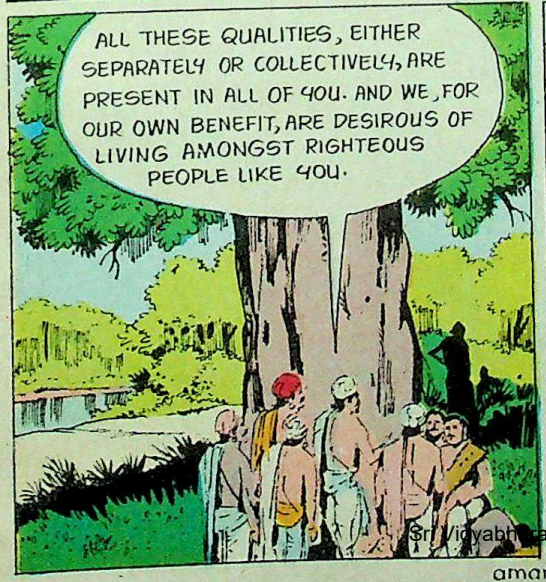

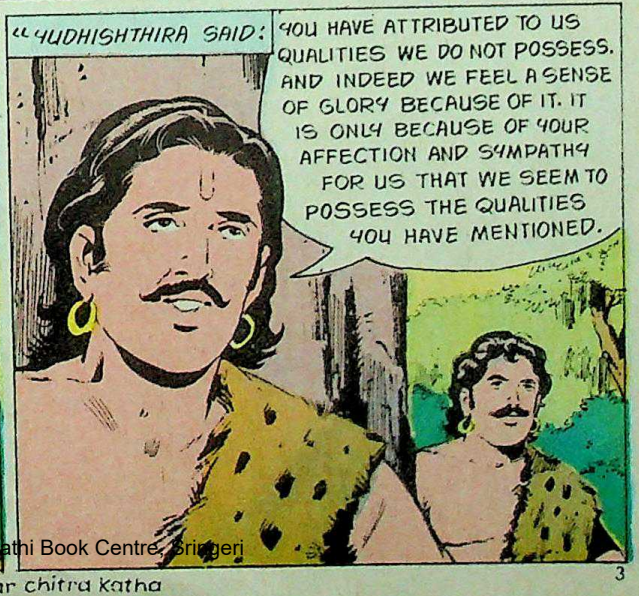

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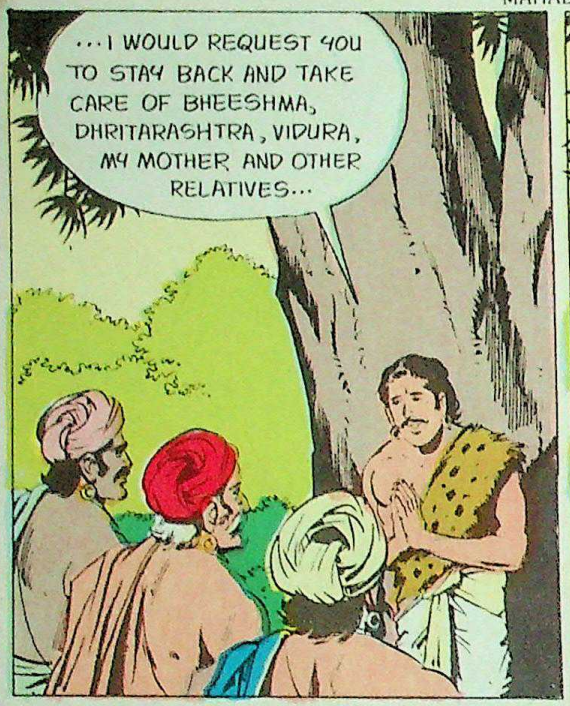

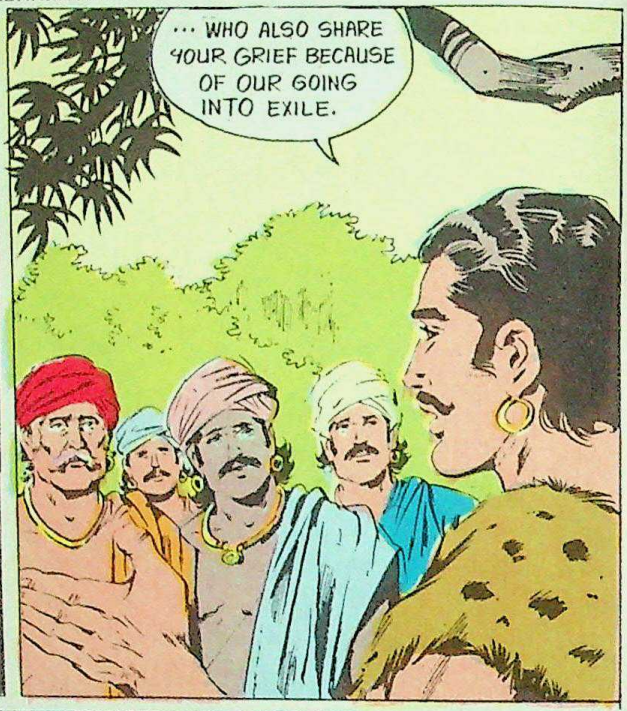

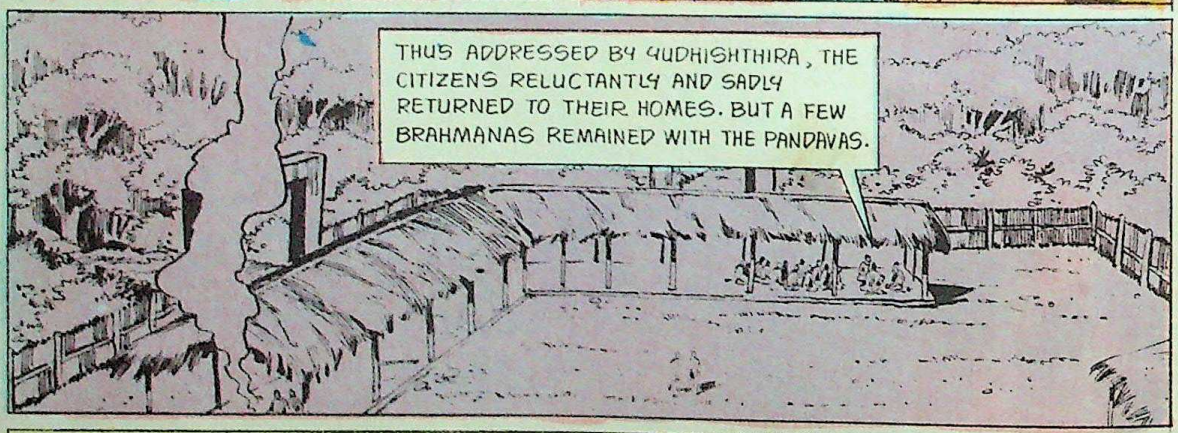

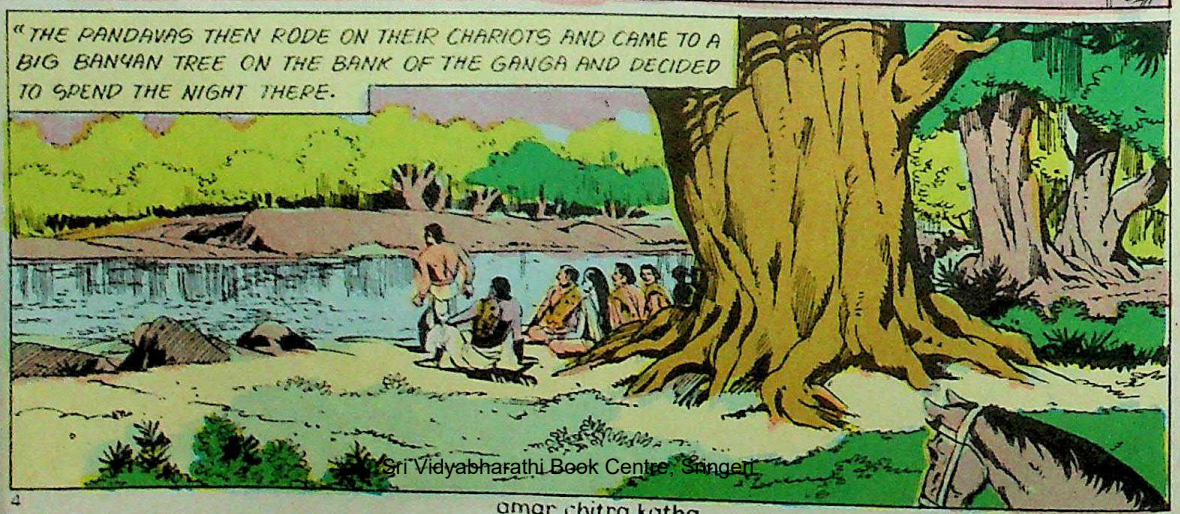

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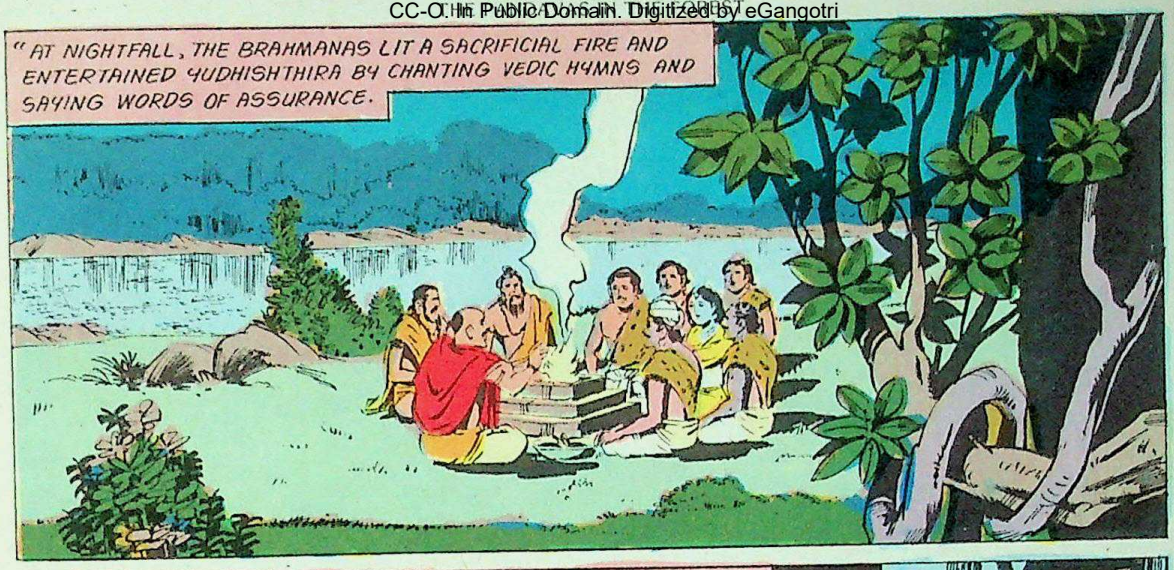

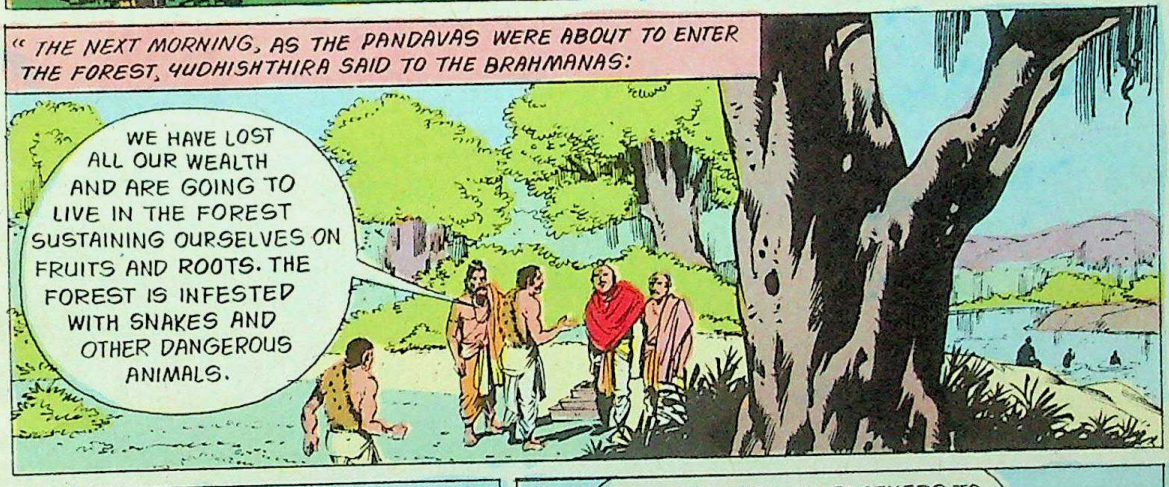

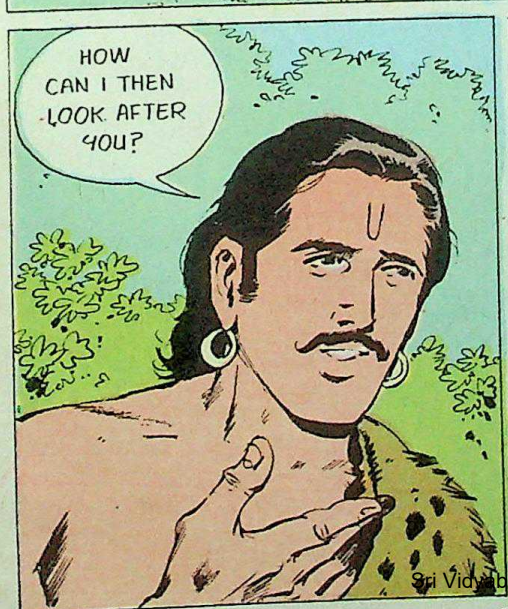

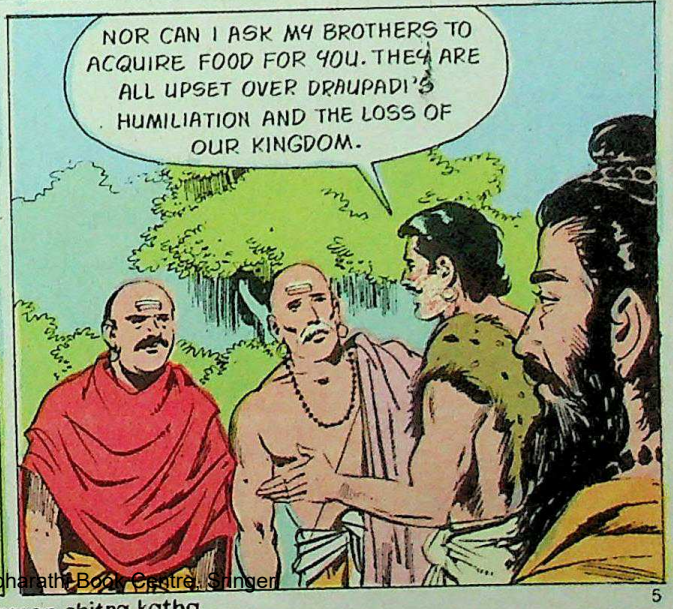

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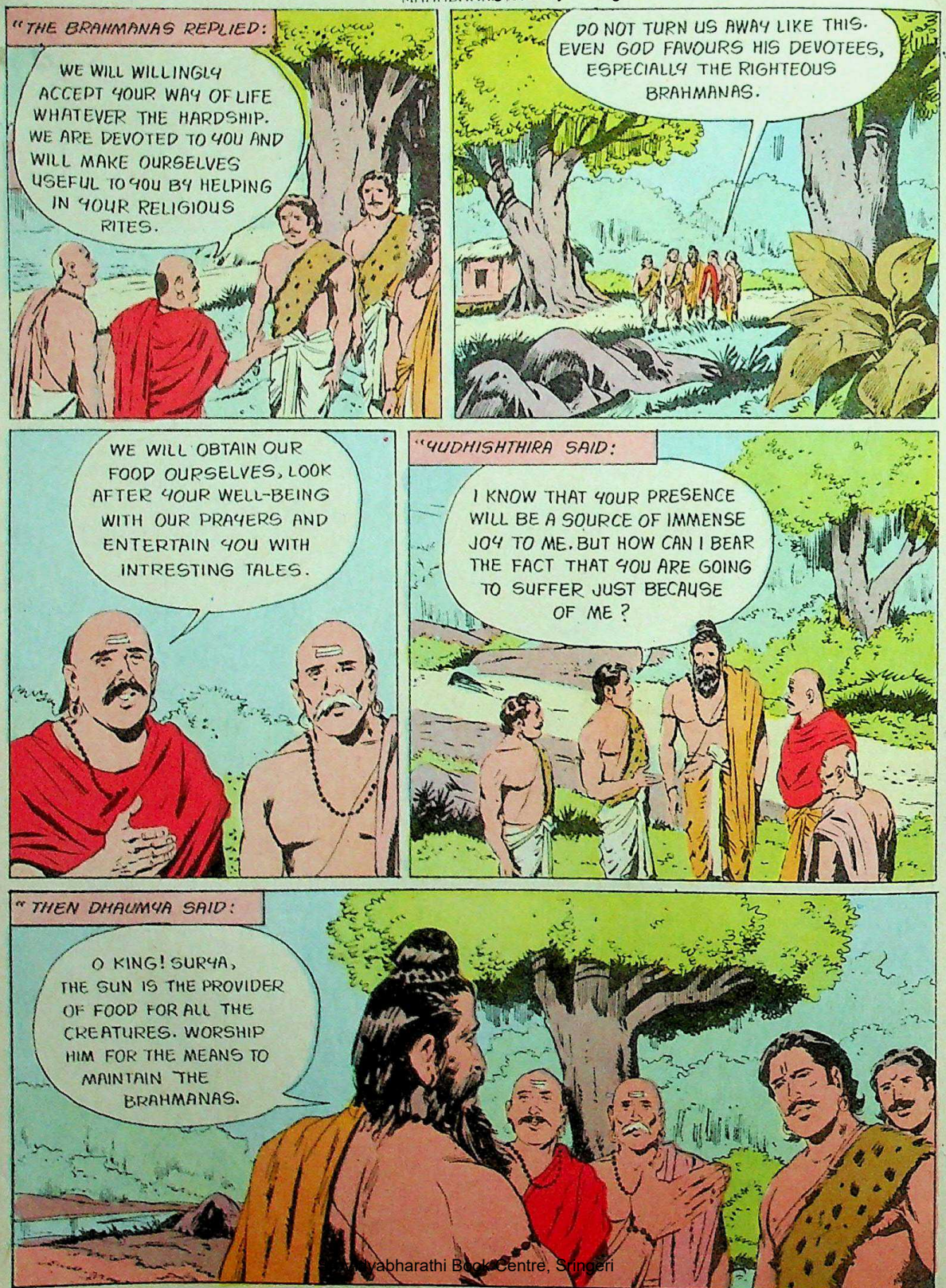

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THUS ADVISED BY DHAUMYA, O MONARCH, YUDHISHTHIRA STARTED HIS AUSTERITIES TO PROPITIATE SURYA.

"STANDING IN THE WATERS OF GANGA, YUDHISHTHIRA FACED THE SUN, CONSUMED NOTHING BUT AIR AND OFFERED PRAYERS WITH FLOWERS AND GRAINS.

YOU ARE THE EYES OF THE UNIVERSE. YOU ARE THE SOUL OF ALL THAT IS LIVING.

ALL THE CELESTIALS FOLLOW YOUR RADIANT CHARIOT IN PURSUIT OF YOUR BLESSINGS.

I TOO BEG OF YOU TO BESTOW ON ME FOOD FOR OFFERING TO MY GUESTS.

"PLEASED BY HIS PRAYERS, SURYA APPEARED BEFORE YUDHISHTHIRA AND SAID:

YOUR DESIRE SHALL BE FULFILLED. I SHALL PROVIDE YOU WITH FOOD DURING ALL THESE TWELVE YEARS.

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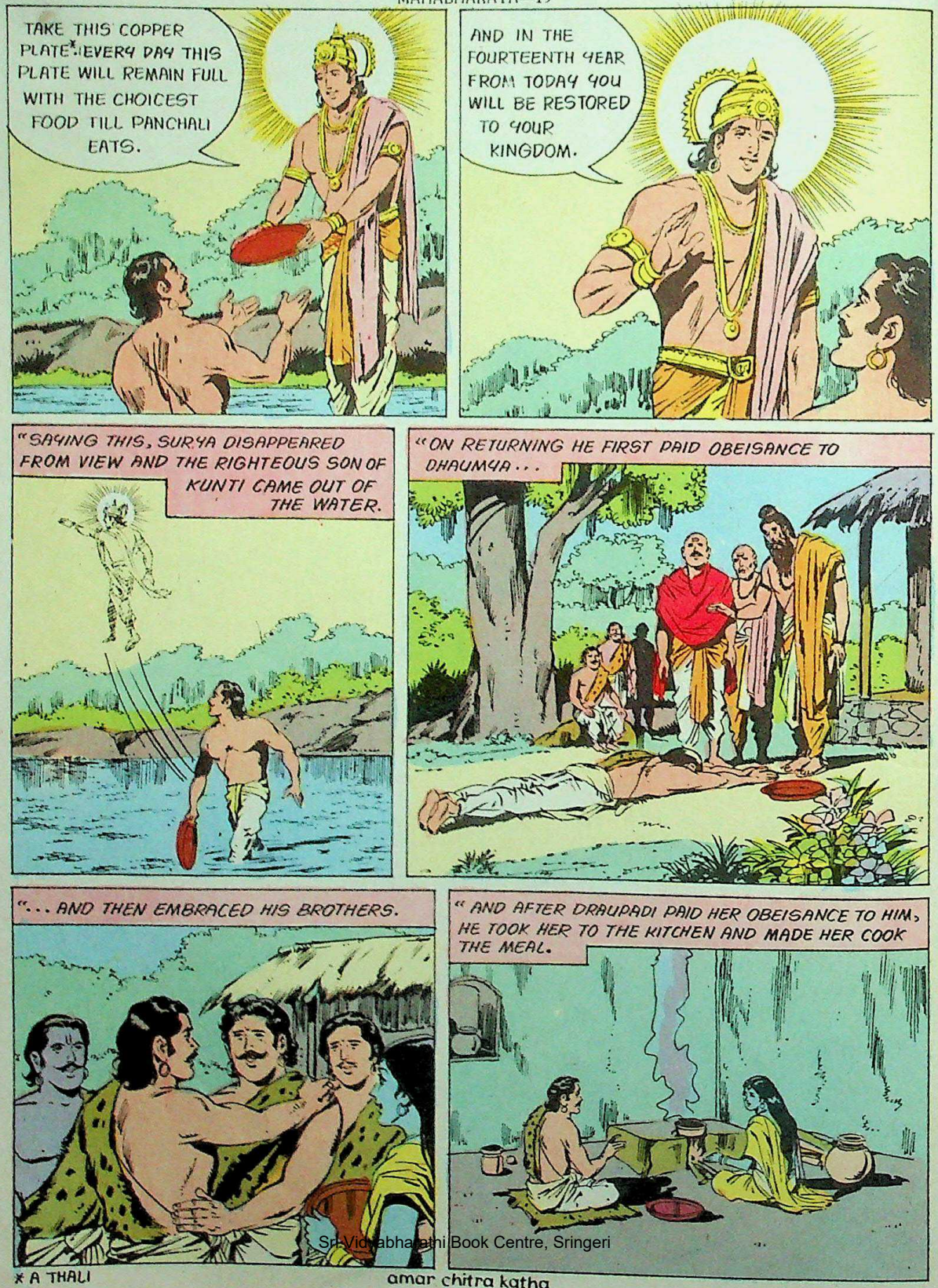

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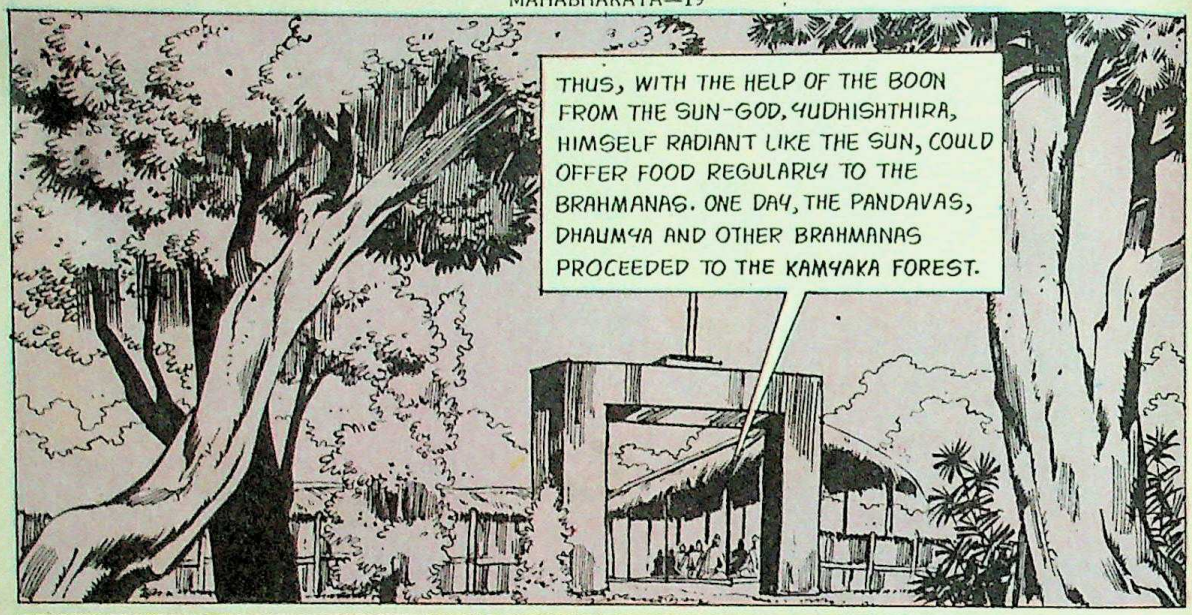

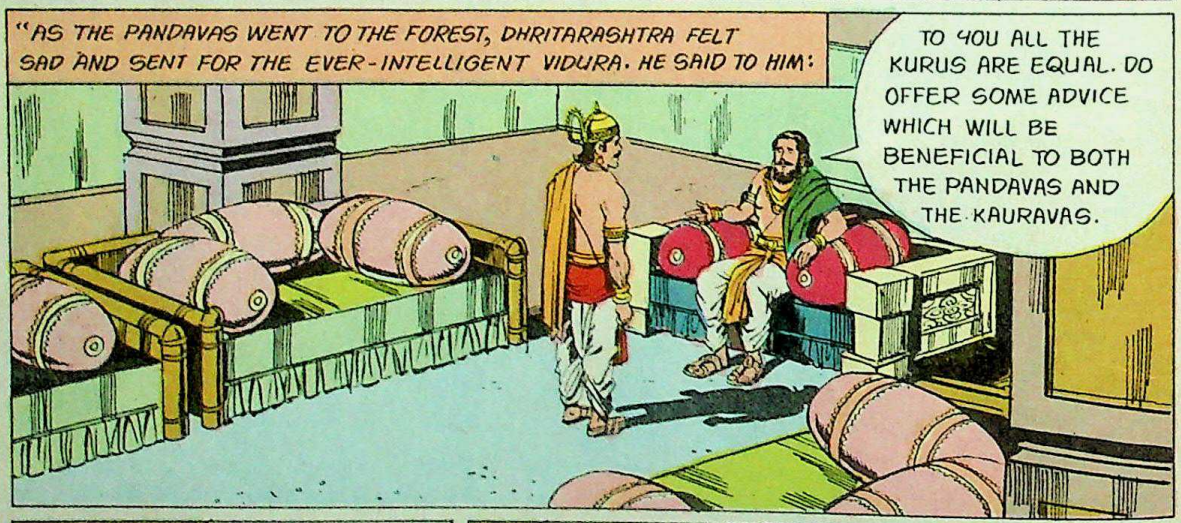

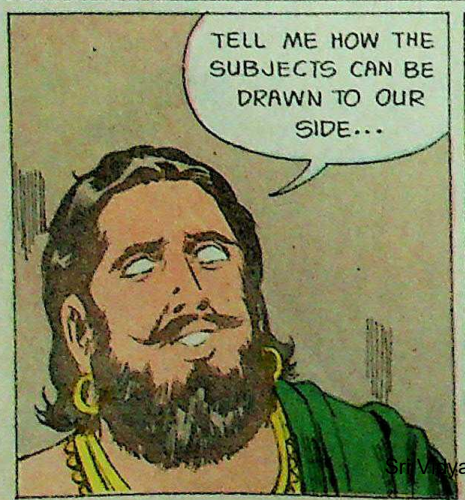

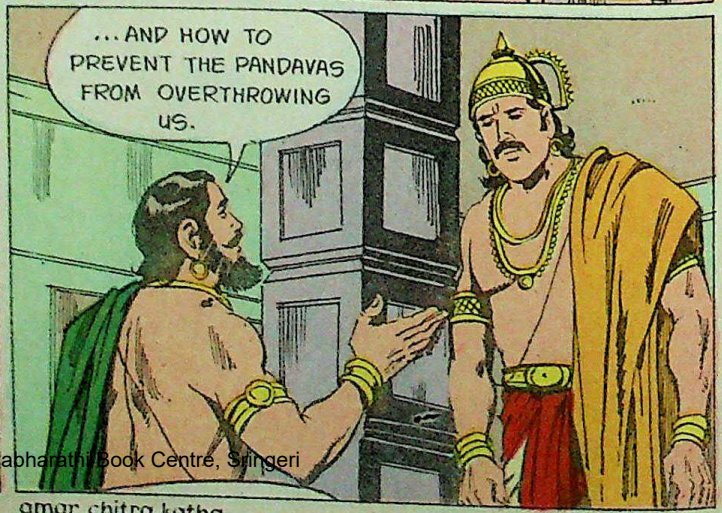

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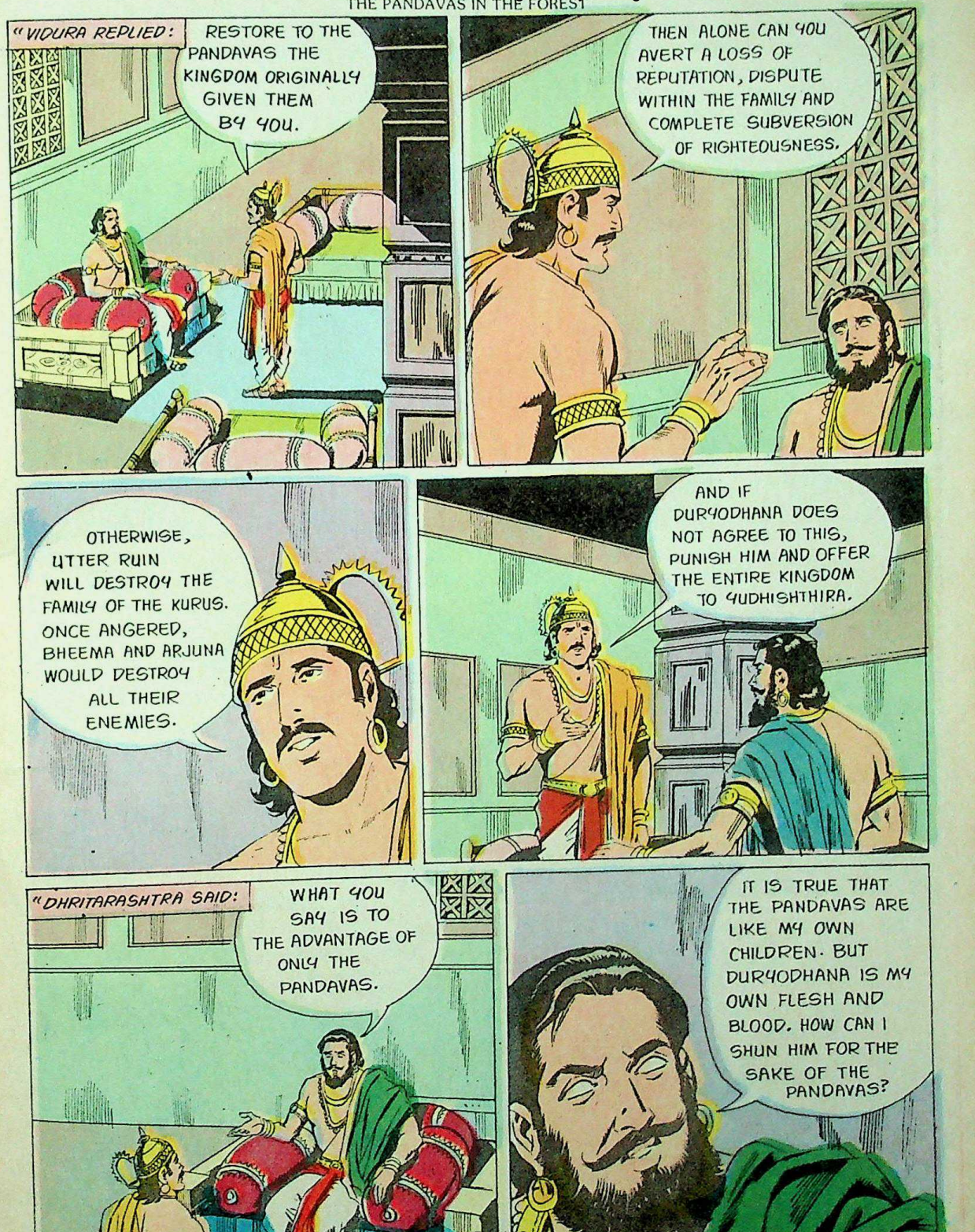

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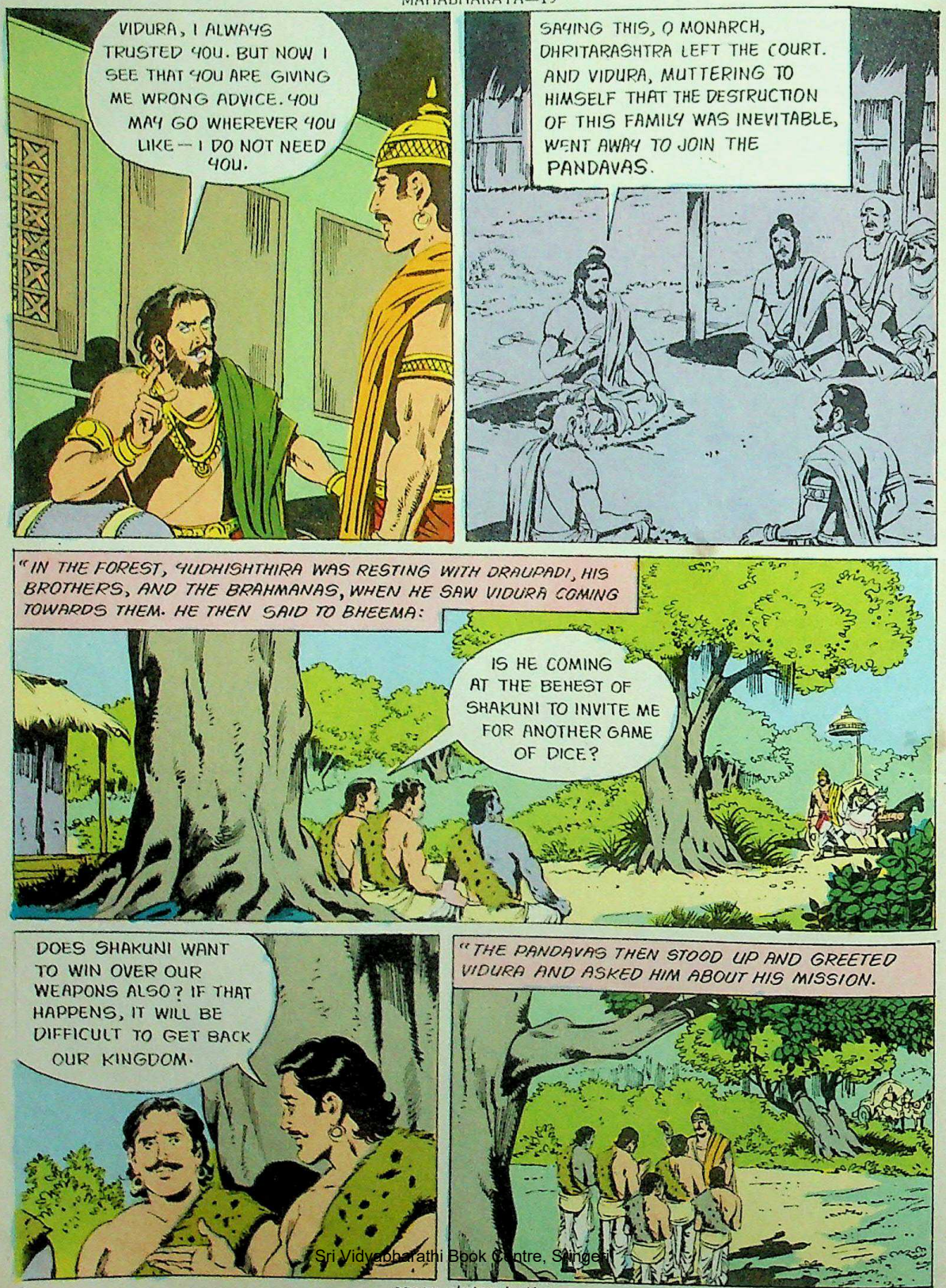

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"VIDURA TOLD THEM ABOUT HIS CONVERSATION WITH DHRITARASHTRA AND SAID:

LIKE AN AILING PERSON WHO LOSES HIS TASTE FOR FOOD, DHRITARASHTRA DID NOT PAY ANY HEED TO MY ADVICE.

NOW LISTEN TO MY ADVICE: ONE WHO FOLLOWS THE PATH OF FORGIVENESS IN SPITE OF GREAT SUFFERING...

...AND SHARES HIS FORTUNES WITH HIS ALLIES, WINS MASTERY OVER THE WHOLE WORLD.

"WHILE VIDURA WAS ENGAGED IN CONVERSATION WITH THE PANDAVAS, SANJAYA, THE MESSENGER OF DHRITARASHTRA, CAME THERE.

"AFTER PAYING OBEISANCE TO THEM AND RESTING A WHILE HE SAID:

O VIDURA! DHRITARASHTRA IS REMEMBERING YOU. SAVE HIS LIFE BY GOING BACK TO HIM.

HEARING THIS, VIDURA TOOK LEAVE OF THE PANDAVAS, AND RETURNED TO HASTINAPURA.

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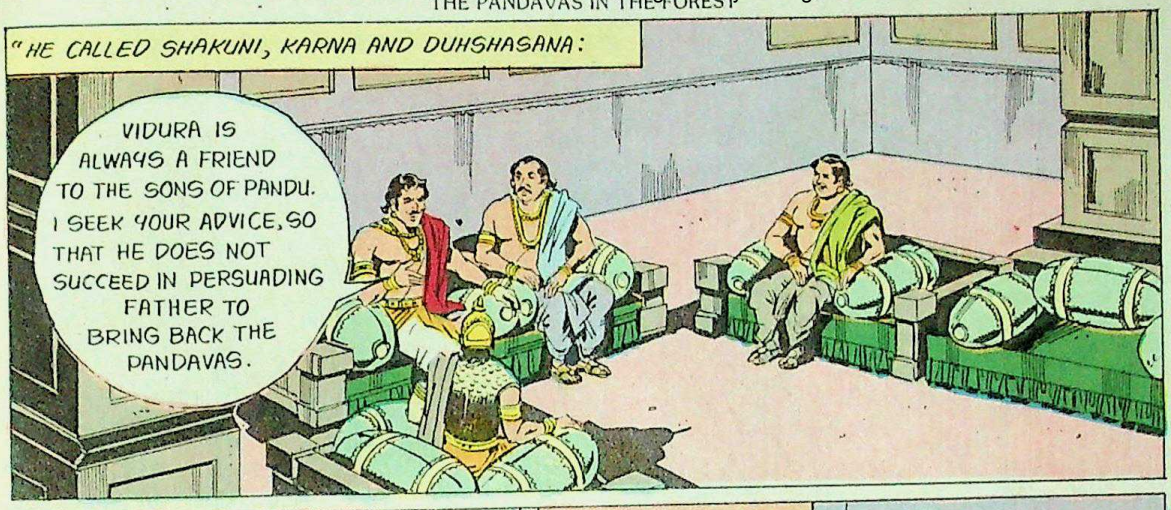

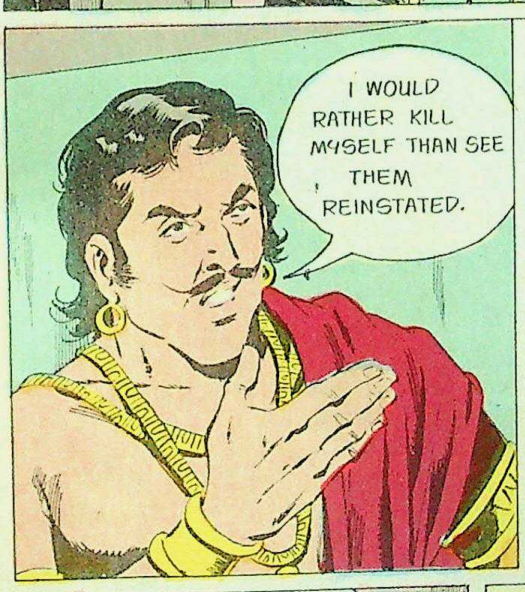

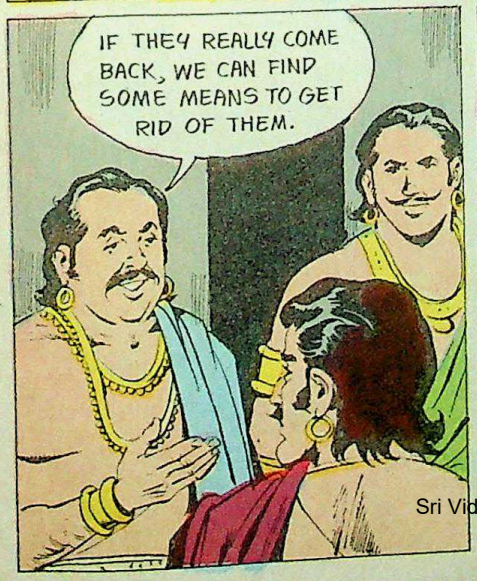

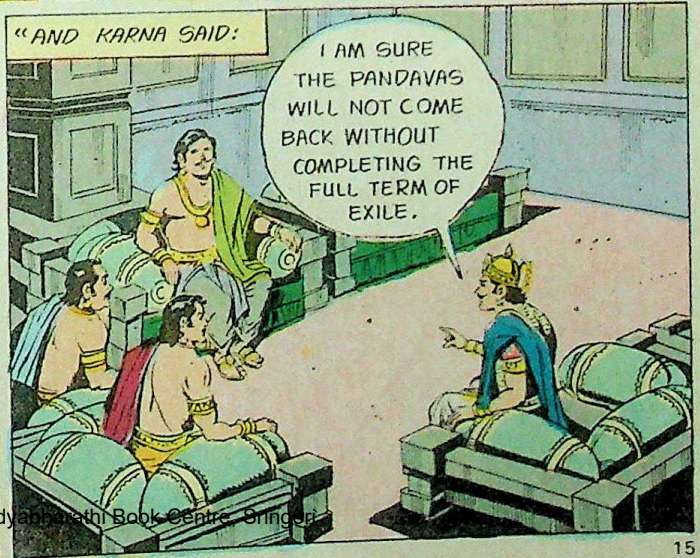

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AS SOON AS THEY STARTED, MY GURU, KRISHNA-DWAIPAYANA DIVINED WHAT HAD HAPPENED AND HASTENED TO WHERE THE PANDAVAS WERE RESIDING. HE DISSUADED THE KAURAVAS FROM MARCHING ON THE PANDAVAS.

"AFTER THAT HE WENT TO DHRITARASHTRA AND SAID:

I AM MUCH DISPLEASED WITH THE EXILE OF THE PANDAVAS AND THE INSULT HANDED OUT TO THEM. NOW, DURYODHANA MUST PURGE FROM HIS MIND THIS URGE TO KILL THEM. IF HE GOES, HE HIMSELF WILL GET KILLED.

"DHRITARASHTRA SAID:

DUE TO MY AFFECTION FOR MY SON, I AM UNABLE TO SEE WHAT IS GOOD FOR THE KAURAVAS.

WHY DON'T YOU ADVISE ON WHAT IS PROPER TO THE ILL-WILLED DURYODHANA?

"VYASA SAID:

SAGE MAITREYA HAD A MEETING WITH THE PANDAVAS, AND HE IS COMING TO MEET YOU. LET HIM DO THIS.

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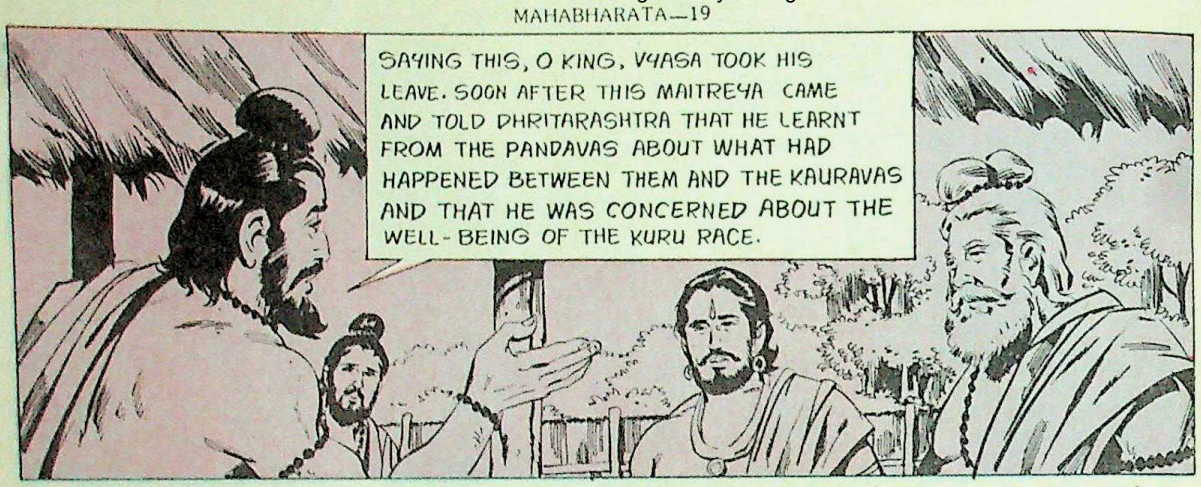

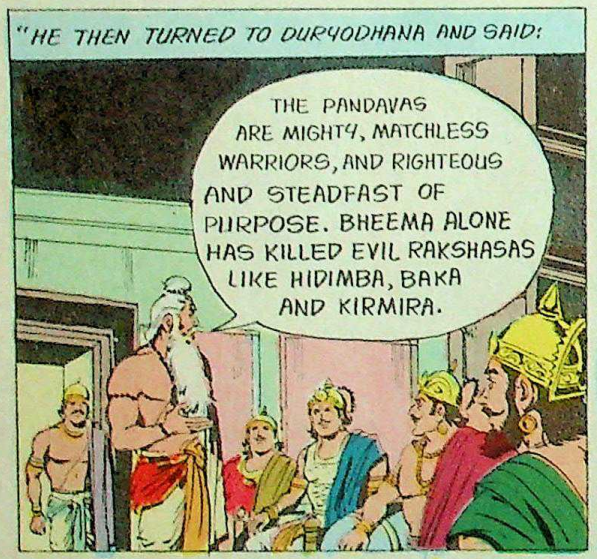

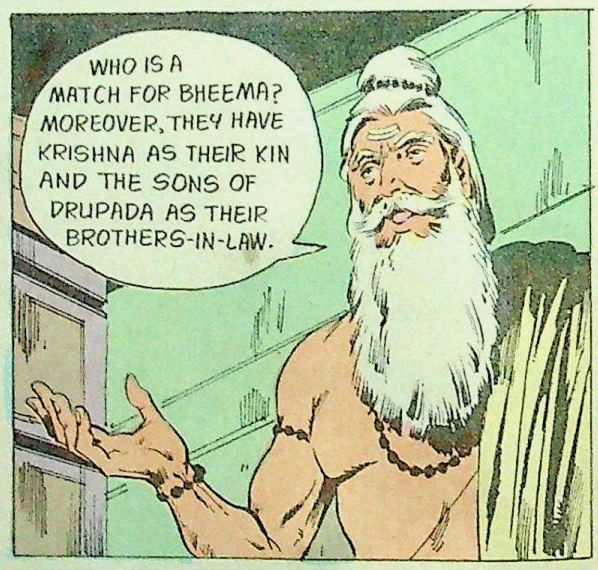

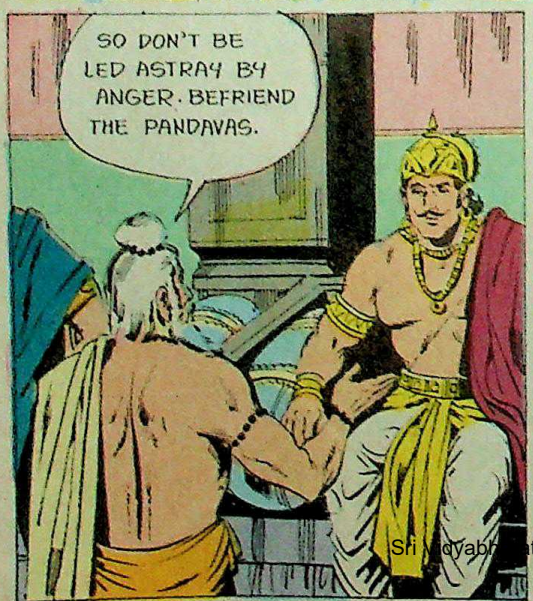

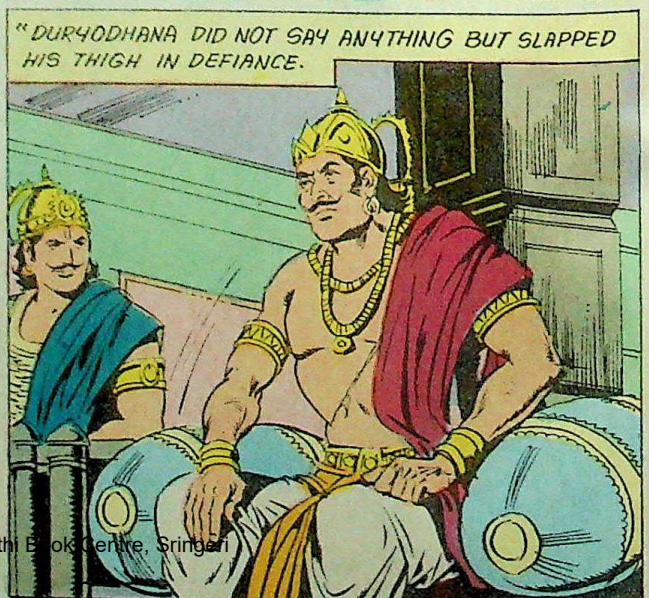

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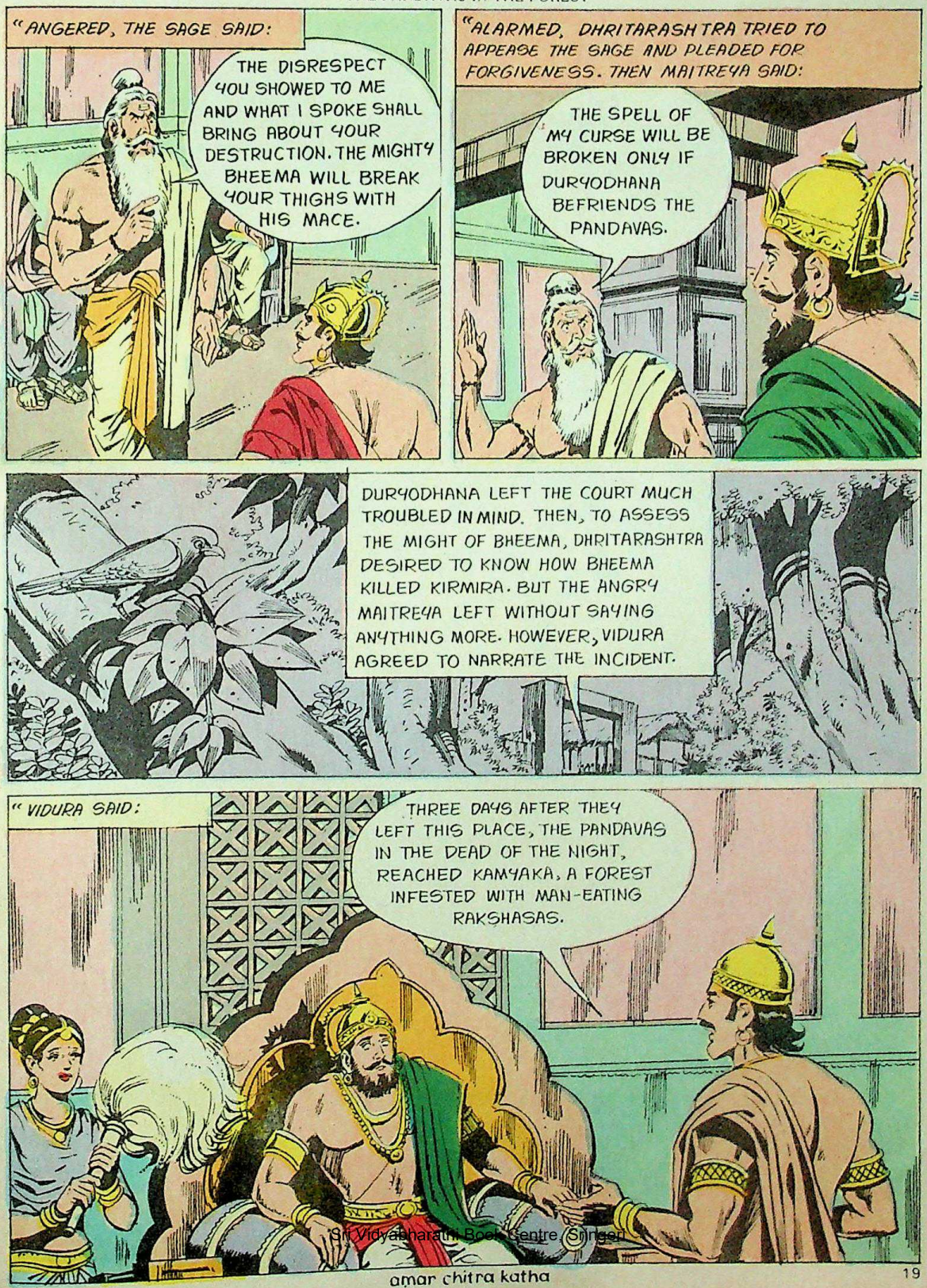

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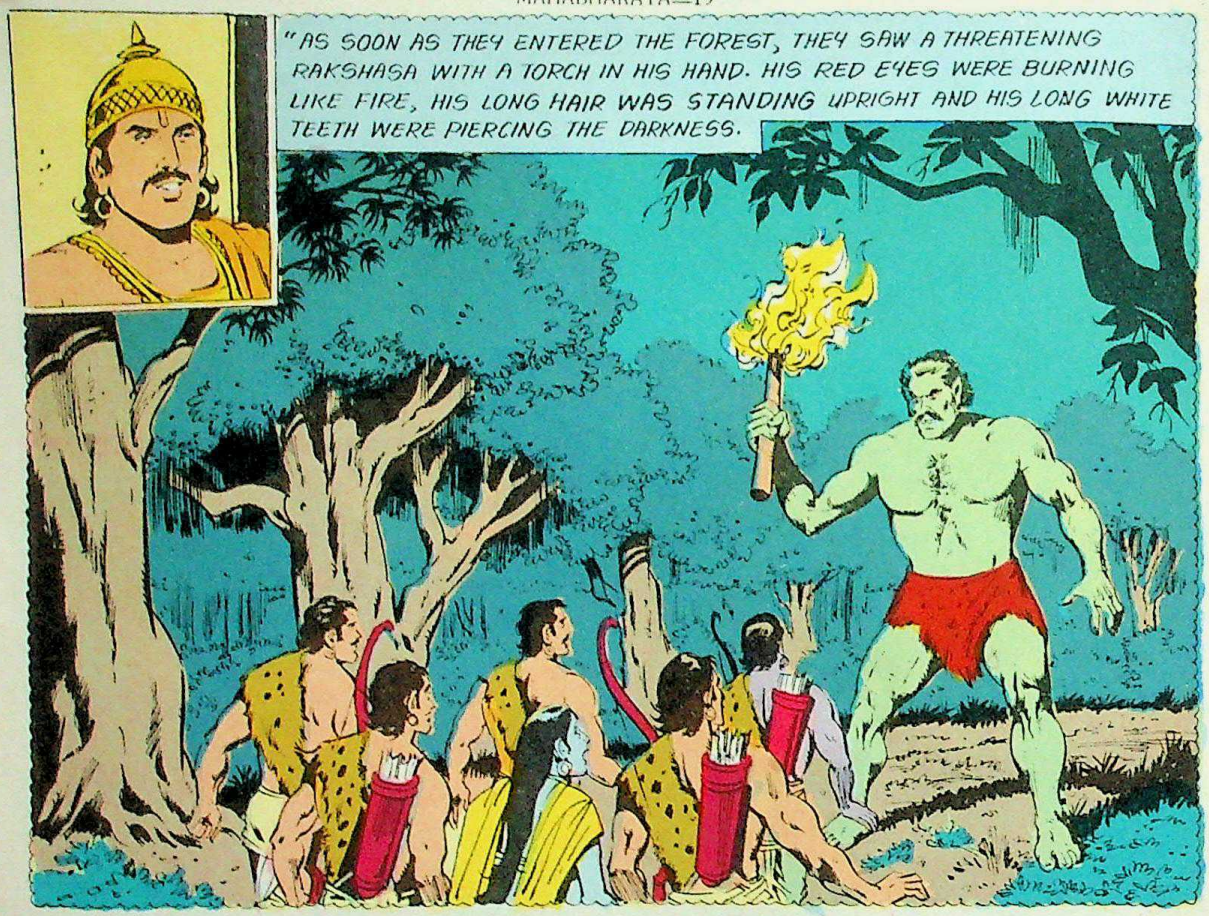

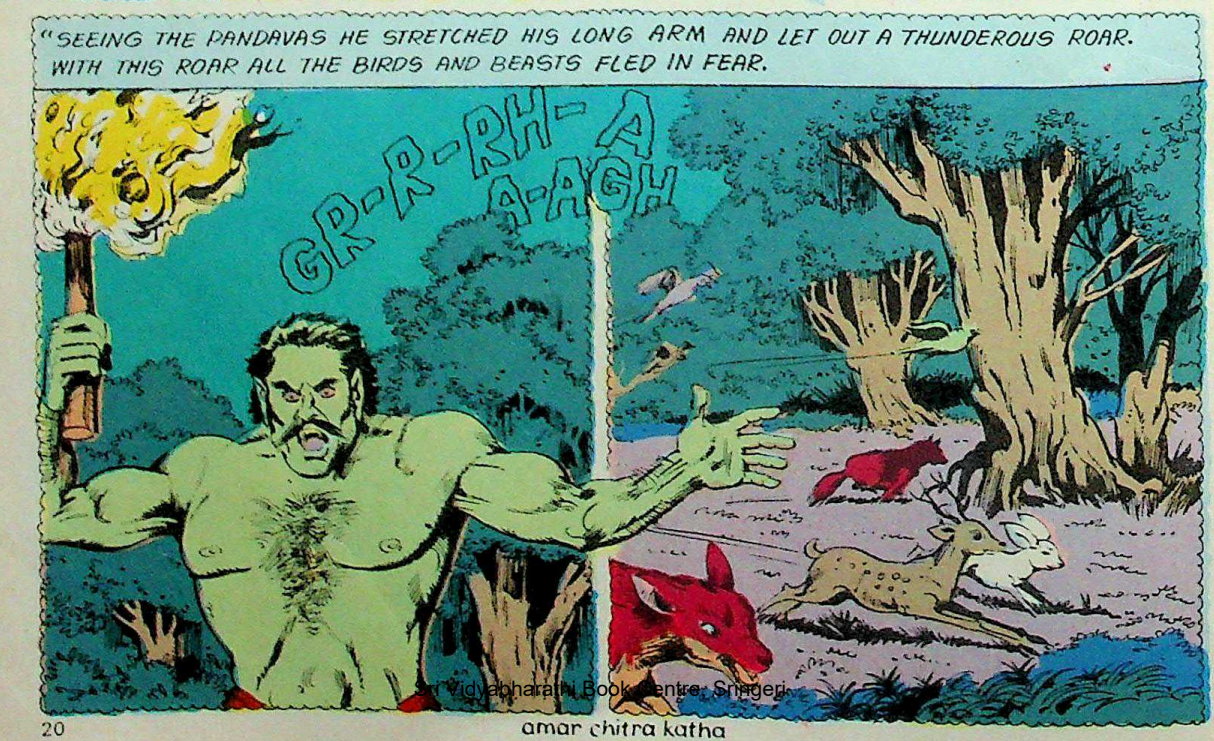

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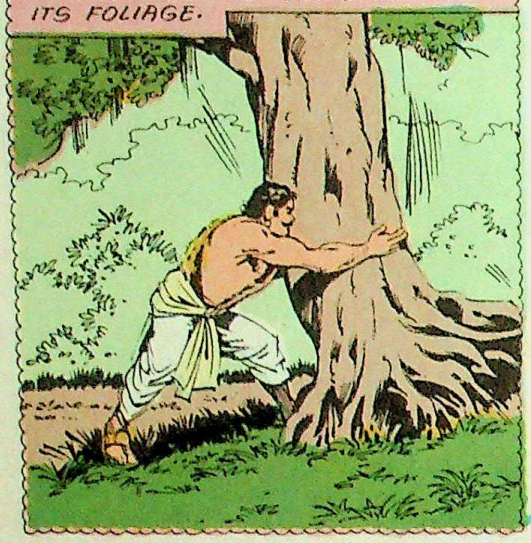
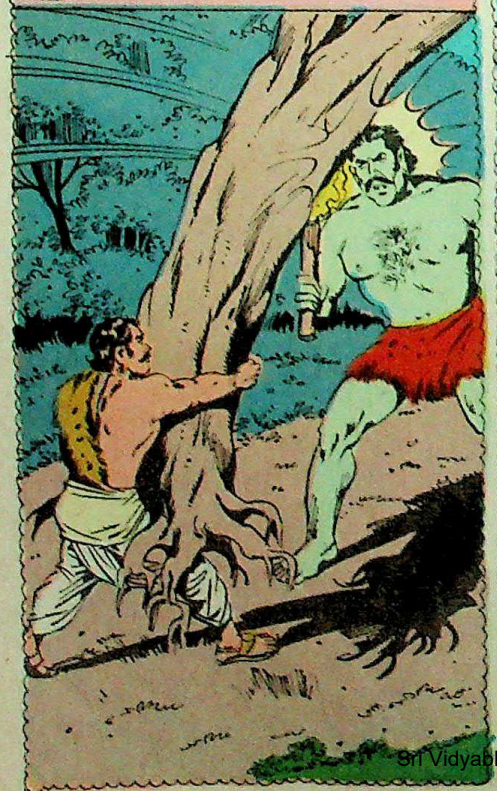
"THEN THE MIGHTY BHEEMA UPROOTED A HUGE TREE AND REMOVED ALL ITS FOLIAGE.

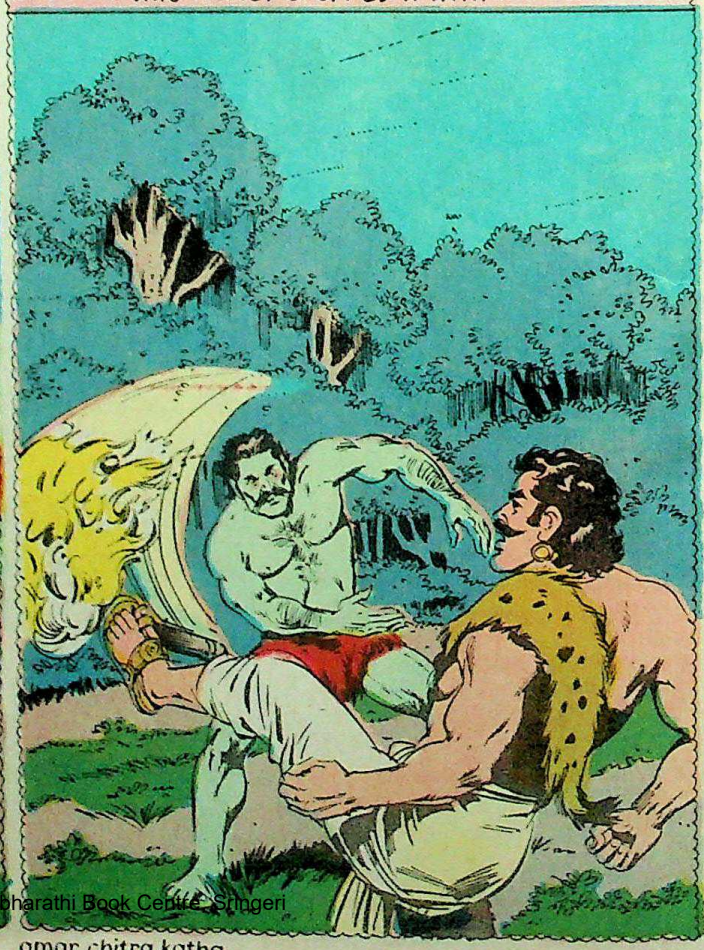


"ARJUNA ALSO READIED HIS GANDEEVA BOW.

"BHEEMA STOPPED ARJUNA, AND THEN GOING FORWARD HIT THE RAKSHASA ON HIS HEAD WITH THE MIGHT OF INDRA WIELDING HIS THUNDERBOLT.



"UNMOVED, THE RAKSHASA HURLED THE TORCH AT BHEEMA WHO EASILY STOPPED IT WITH HIS LEFT FOOT.



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"KIRMIRA TOO UPROOTED A TREE. THE TWO FOUGHT EACH OTHER WITH TREES AS WEAPONS. AND THE TREES BROKE AS REEDS IN THE COURSE OF THE FIGHT.

"AFTER BATTLING WITH TREES FOR SOME TIME, THE ANGRY RAKSHASA LIFTED A ROCK AND THREW IT AT BHEEMA.

"AND SEEING HIM UNDAUNTED, RUSHED AT HIM AND CAUGHT HIM BY HIS ARMS.

"BHEEMA WAS STILL BURNING WITH ANGER BECAUSE OF THE INSULTS HEAPED ON DRAUPADI BY DURYODHANA. HIS WHOLE WRATH NOW FELL ON KIRMIRA.

" HE CAUGHT KIRMIRA BY HIS WAIST AND SHOOK HIM AND THE RAKSHASA TREMBLED LIKE A TREE IN A STORM.

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"AS HE TRIED TO CRUSH KIRMIRA IN HIS ARMS, THE RAKSHASA SCREAMED IN PAIN.

OH-MOH-OTA-OH

"SEEING THAT THE RAKSHASA HAD ALMOST FAINTED, HE PLACED HIS KNEE ON THE WAIST OF KIRMIRA AND STRANGLED HIM.

"VIDURA ENDED HIS STORY:

O MONARCH! ON MY WAY, I SAW LYING THERE THE BODY OF KIRMIRA SLAIN BY BHEEMA. AND I HEARD OF THIS SUPER-HUMAN DEED OF BHEEMA FROM THE BRAHMANAS WHO WERE PRESENT THERE.

HEARING IN DETAIL HOW BHEEMA HAD KILLED KIRMIRA, KING DHRITARASHTRA HEAVED A DEEP SIGH AND BECAME IMMERSED IN THOUGHT.

"ON LEARNING THAT THE PANDAVAS HAD GONE INTO EXILE, THE BHOJAS, THE ANDHAKAS AND THE VRISHNIS CAME TO THE FOREST TO MEET THEM.

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"THE PANCHALA PRINCE, DHRISTADYUMNA AND THE KING OF CHEDI, DHRISHTAKETU AND THE VALOROUS PRINCE OF KEKAYA ALSO CAME THERE CURSING THE SONS OF DHRITARASHTRA. WITH KRISHNA AT THEIR HEAD, ALL THOSE KSHATRIYA CHIEFS SAT, SURROUNDING THE RIGHTEOUS YUDHISHTHIRA.

"AS THEY DISCUSSED THE FUTURE, KRISHNA SAID:

THE EARTH WILL BE DRENCHED WITH THE BLOOD OF THIS EVIL QUARTET OF DURYODHANA, KARNA, SHAKUNI AND DUHSHASANA.

"THEN HE TURNED TO YUDHISHTHIRA AND SAID:

WE ARE READY TO FIGHT AND INFLICT DEFEAT ON THEM AND THEIR ALLIES AND MAKE YOU THE KING.

WHILE SAYING THIS, KRISHNA BECAME MORE AND MORE ANGRY AND IT APPEARED AS IF HE WOULD DESTROY THE WHOLE UNIVERSE.

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"THEN ARJUNA RECOUNTED EPISODES FROM KRISHNA'S PREVIOUS INCARNATIONS AND SAID:

YOU ARE THE ALMIGHTY. YOU ARE THE TRUTH, THE LORD OF LORDS AND THE KING OF THE UNIVERSE.

"TO THIS DRAUPADI ADDED—

IMMANENT LORD! IN YOU EVERYTHING IS ESTABLISHED.

THEN, O KRISHNA HOW COULD ONE LIKE ME, THE WIFE OF THE PANDAVA HEROES, THE SISTER OF DHRISHTADYUMNA AND, ABOVE ALL, A FRIEND OF YOURS, HAVE BEEN DRAGGED INTO THE ASSEMBLY OF THE KAURAVAS TO BE DISHONOURED?

FOR FOUR REASONS, KRISHNA, I MUST ALWAYS BE PROTECTED BY YOU: FOR KINSHIP, FOR HONOUR, FOR FRIENDSHIP AND, ABOVE ALL, YOU ARE THE ALL-POWERFUL LORD, KRISHNA.

"KRISHNA SAID:

DO NOT GRIEVE. I PROMISE YOU THIS; YOU WILL BECOME THE QUEEN OF KINGS.

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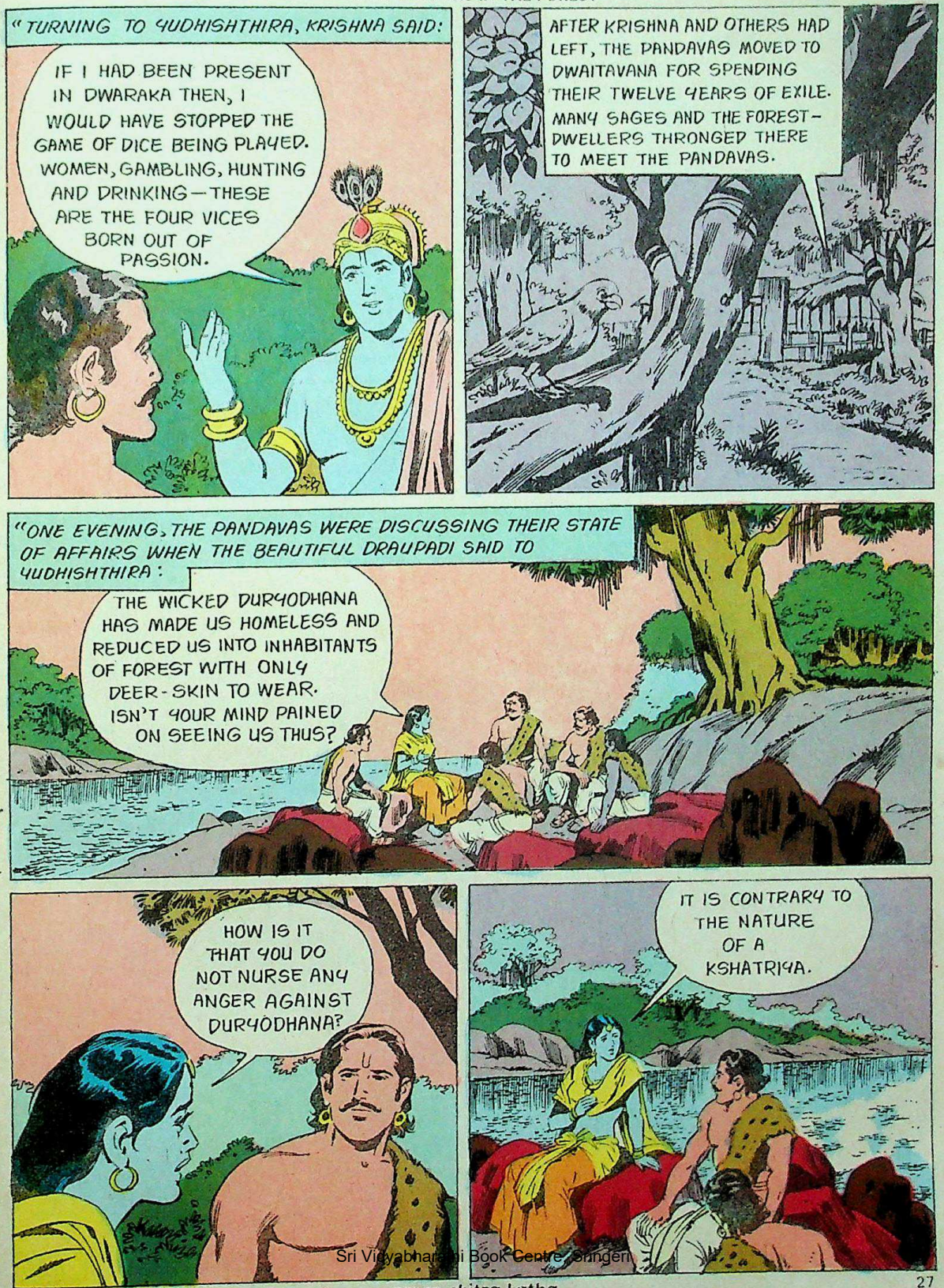

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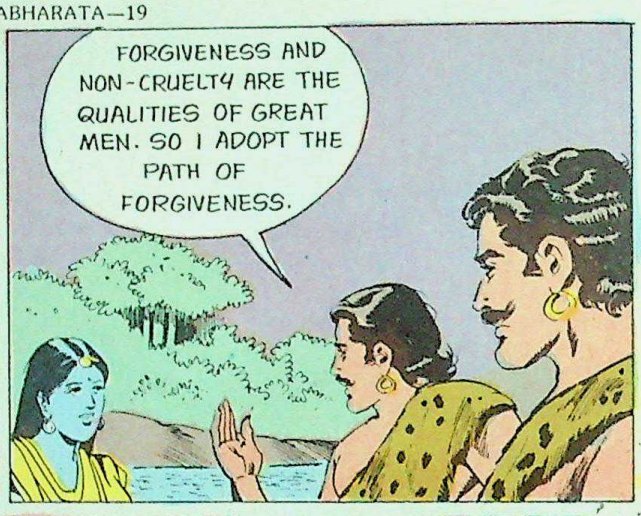

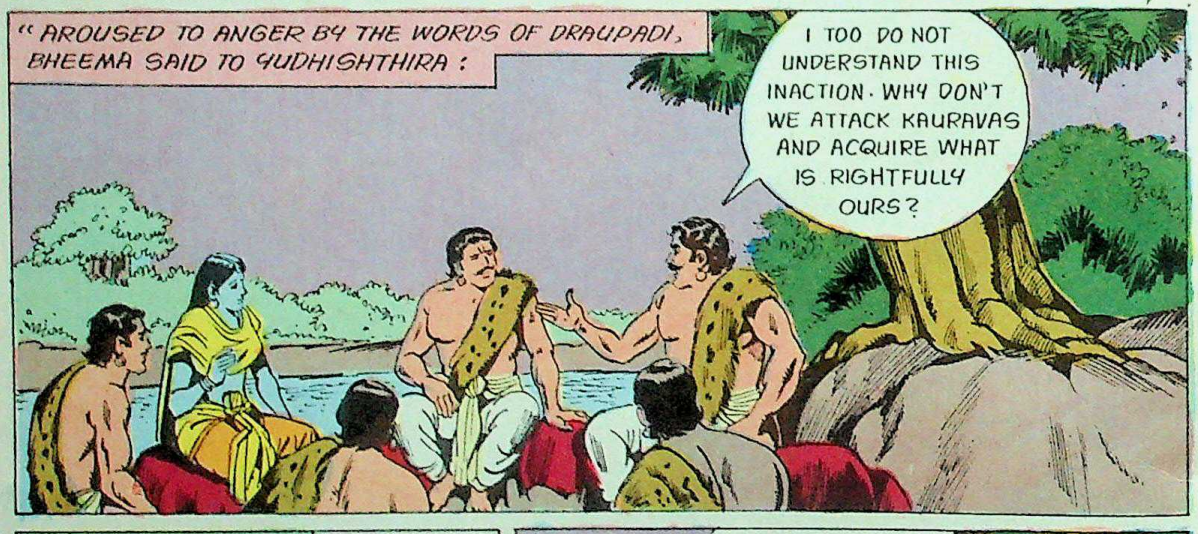

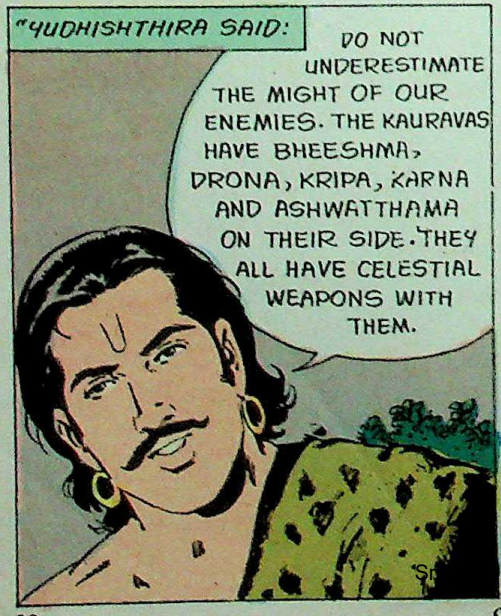

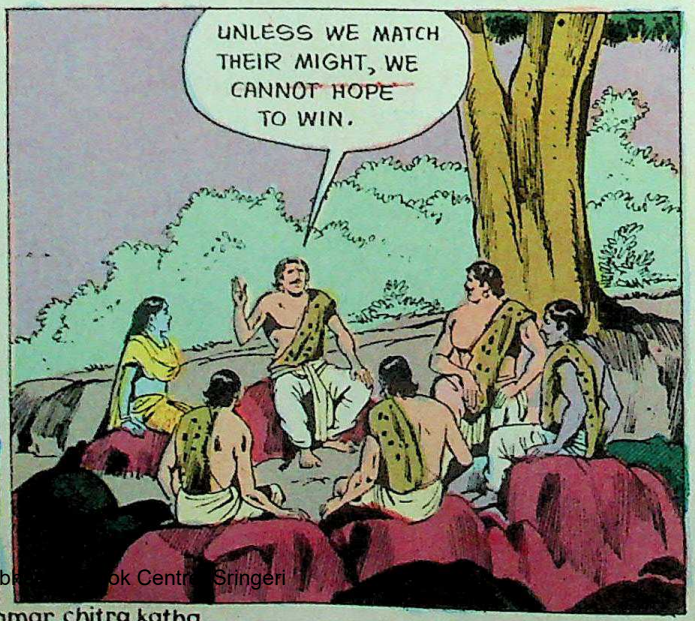

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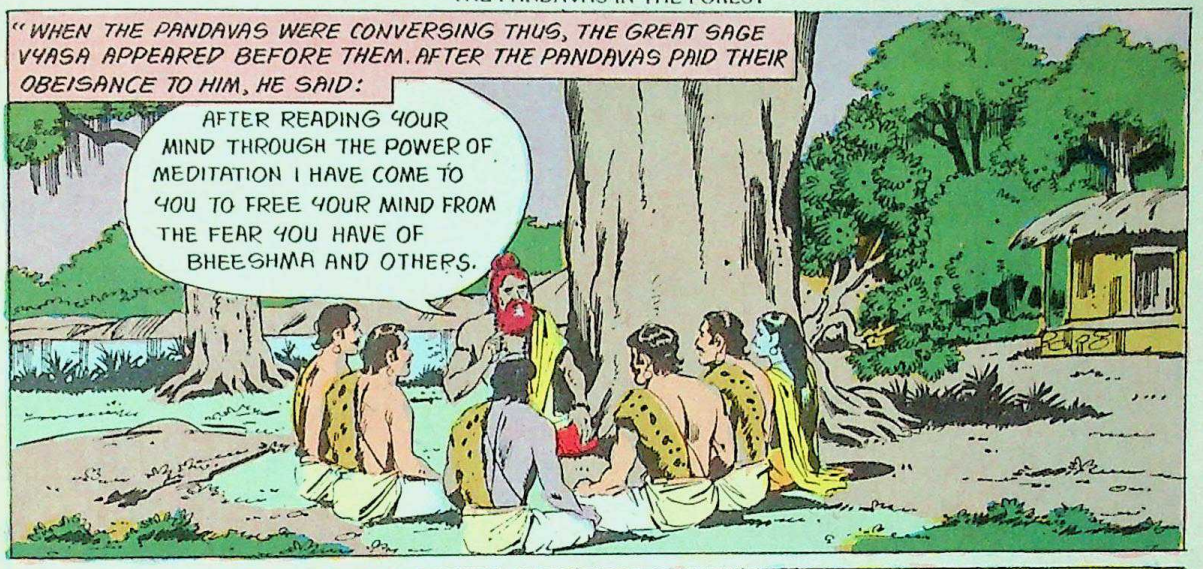

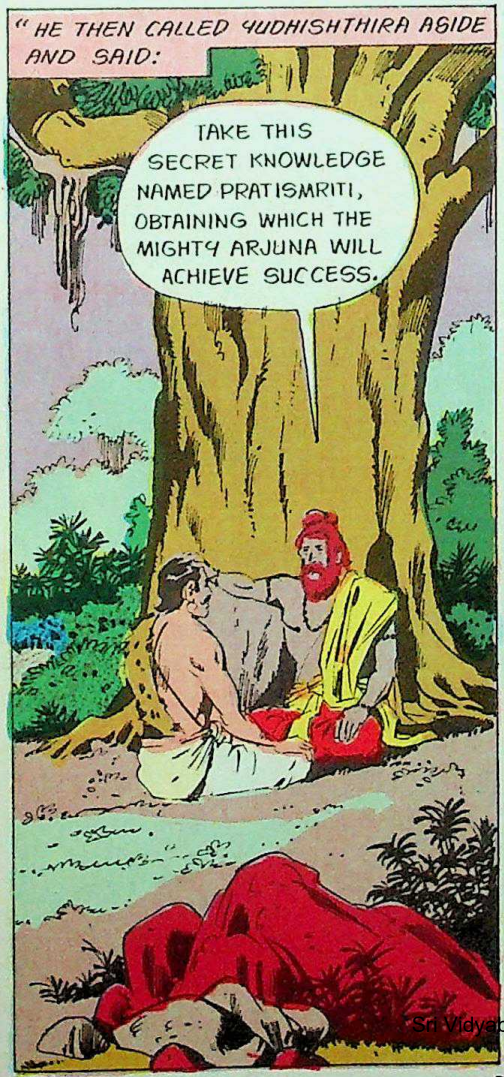

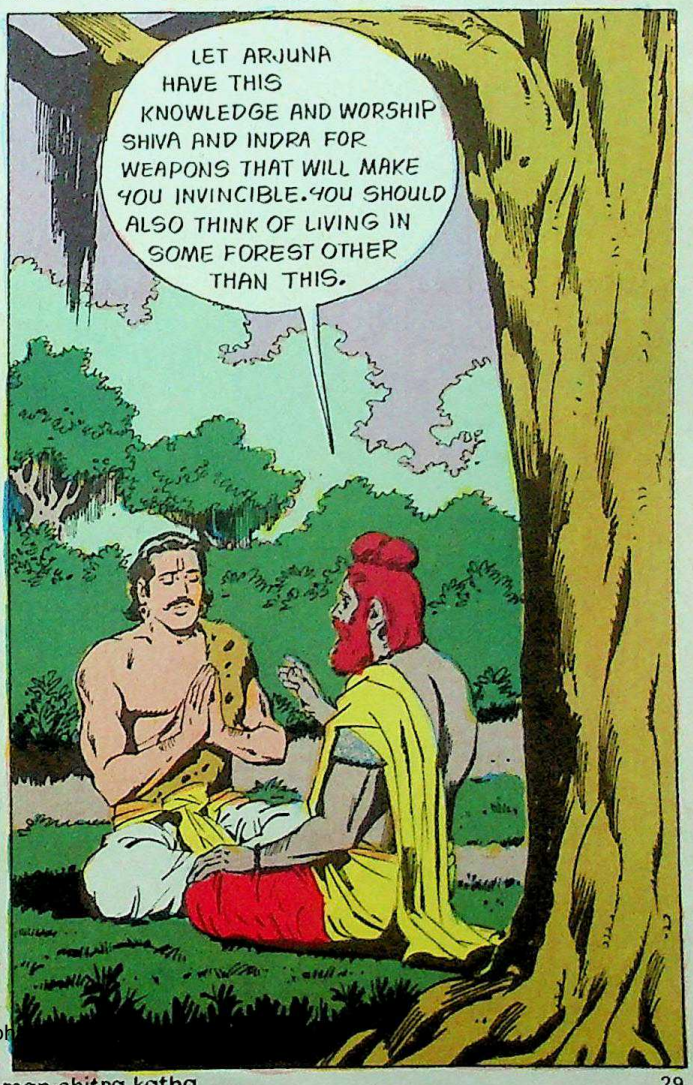

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"AFTER IMPARTING THUS THE YOGA VIDYA, VYASA DISAPPEARED. THE RIGHTEOUS YUDHISHTHIRA WENT FROM THE DVAITA TO THE FOREST KNOWN AS KAMYAKA ON THE BANKS OF THE SARASWATI.

"THEN, REMEMBERING THE SAGE'S ADVICE, YUDHISHTHIRA CALLED ARJUNA TO HIS SIDE AND SAID:

BHEESHMA, DRONA, KRIPA, KARNA AND ASHWATTHAMA ARE PROFICIENT IN WEAPONRY. AND THEY ARE ALL BEING LOOKED AFTER WELL BY DURYODHANA.

SO, WHEN THE NEED ARISES THEY WON'T HESITATE TO SHOW THEIR MIGHT AGAINST US.

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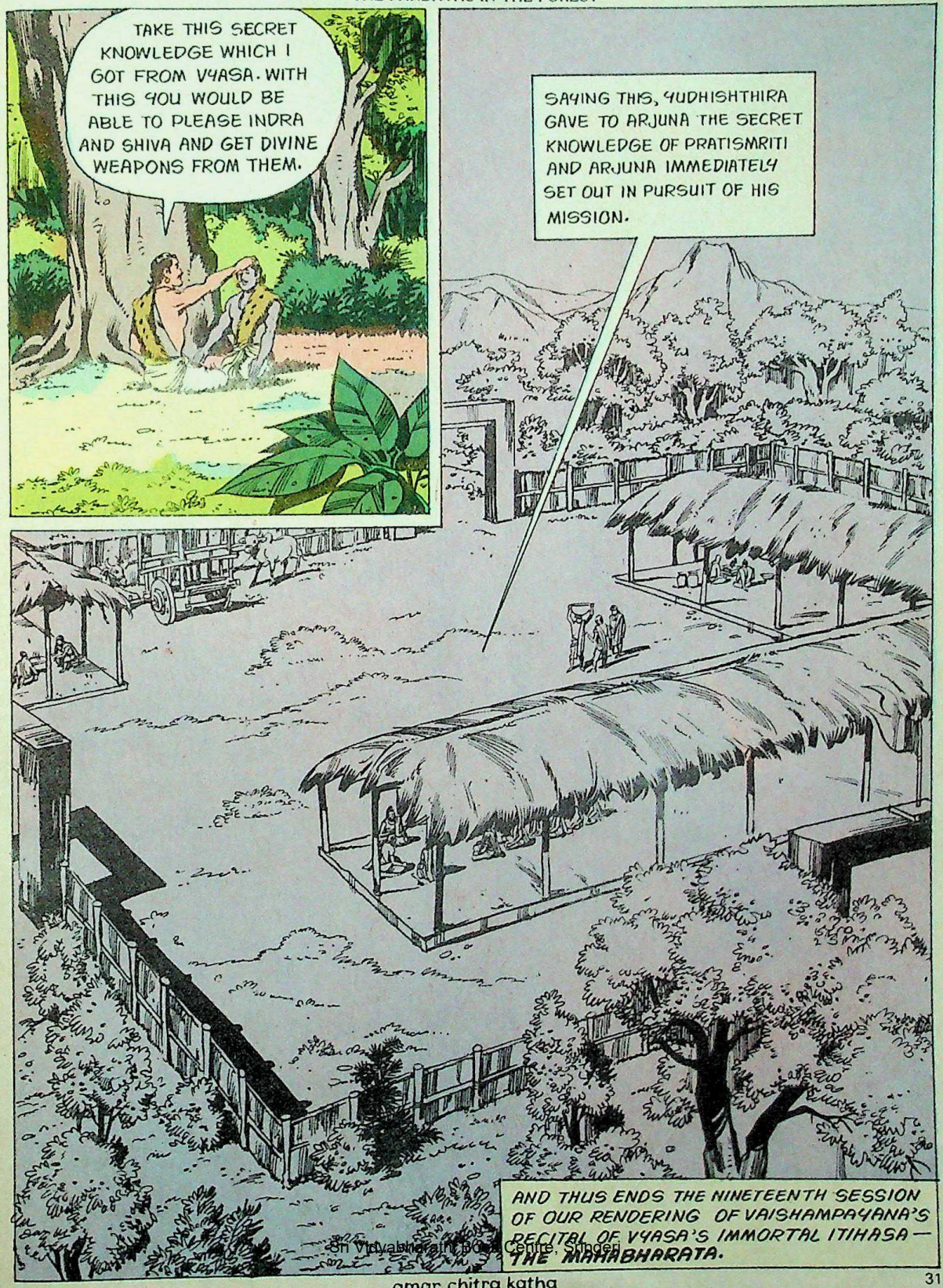

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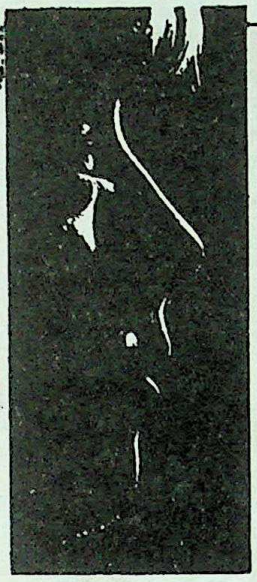

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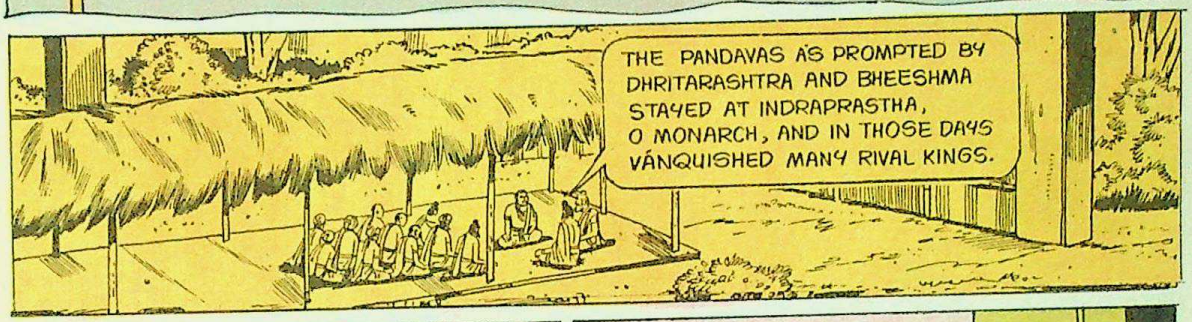
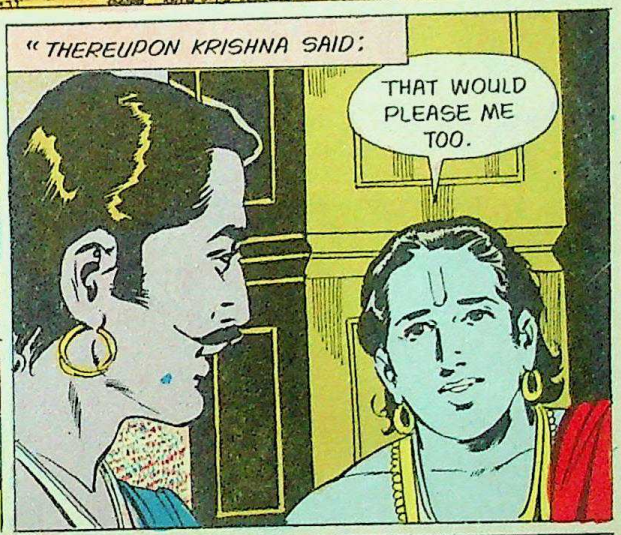
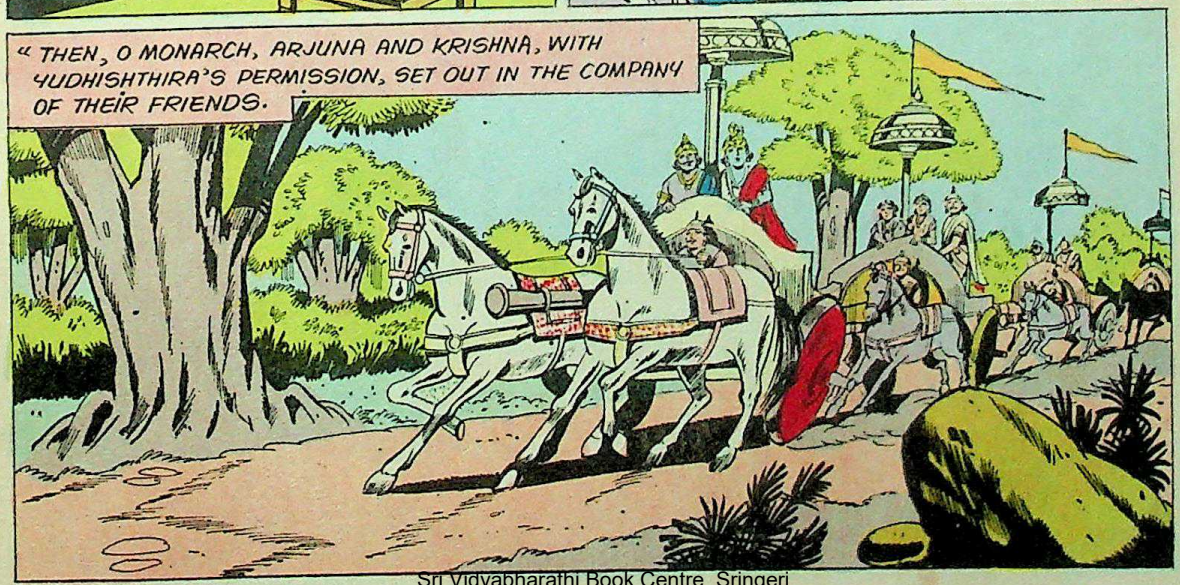
A HALL FOR YUDHISHTHIRA







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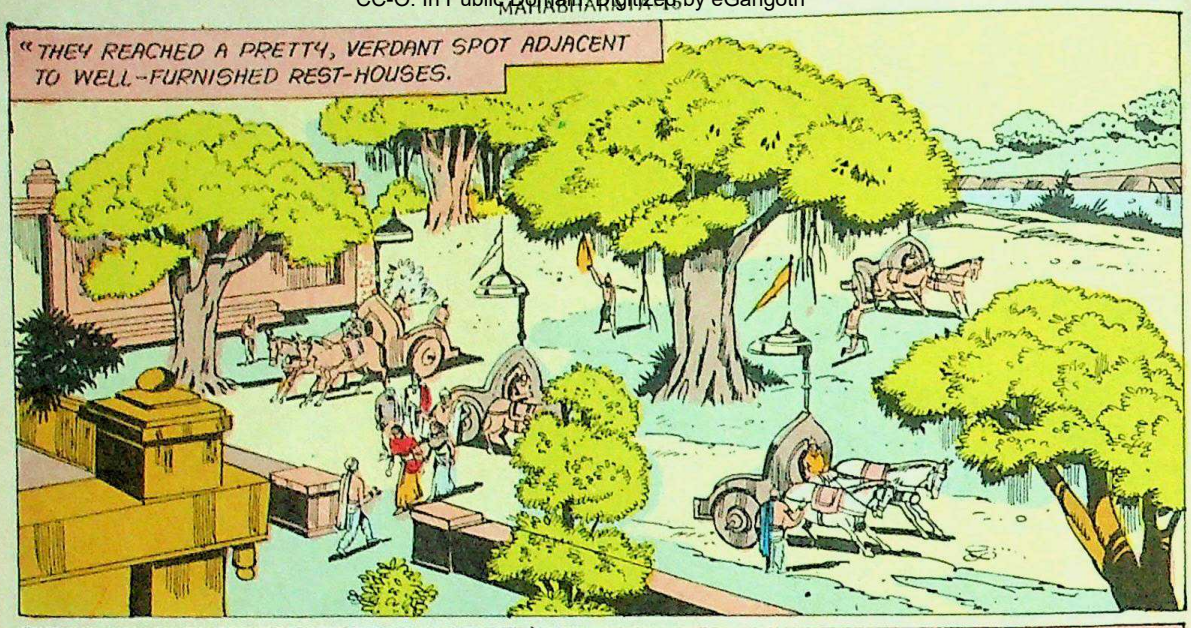

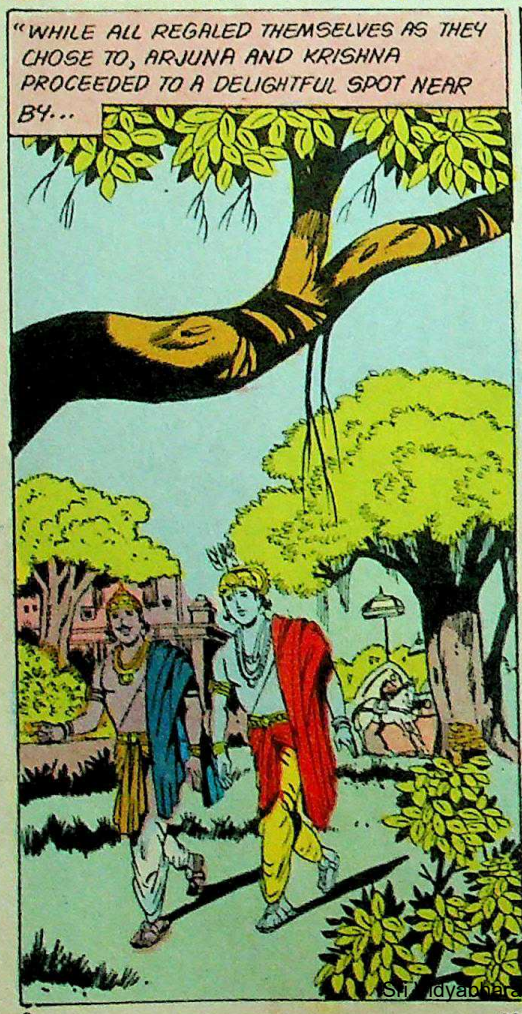

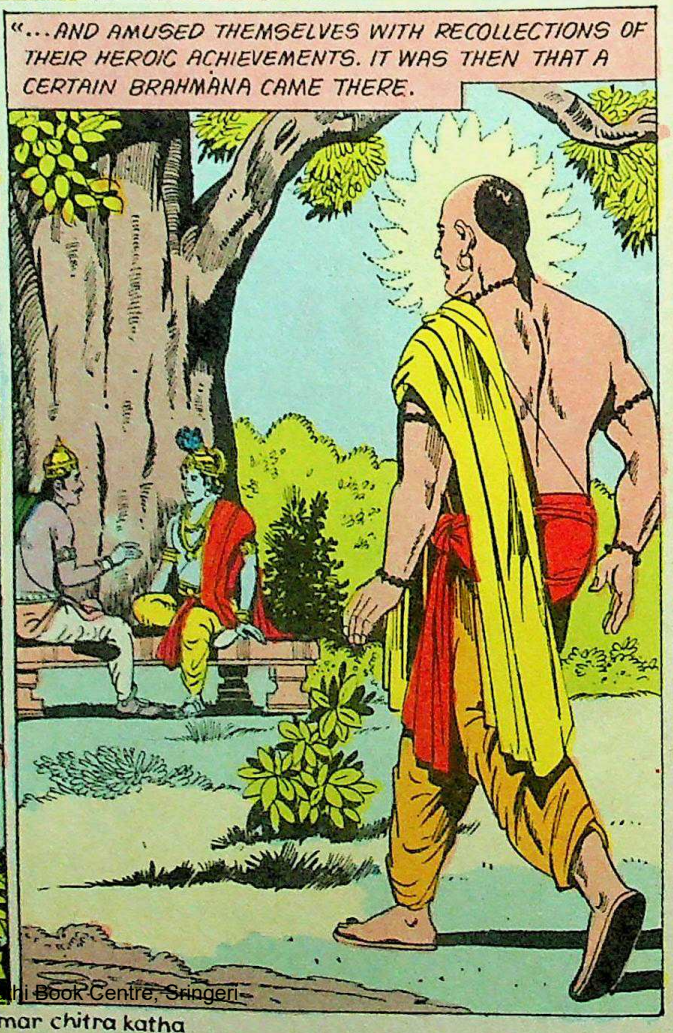

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"BEHOLDING HIM WHOSE VISAGE WAS RESPLENDENT LIKE BURNISHED GOLD...

"...ARJUNA AND KRISHNA ROSE HASTILY FROM THEIR SEATS...

"...AWAITING HIS COMMANDS. THEN THAT BRAHMANA SAID TO THEM:

I AM A BRAHMANA WHOSE HUNGER IS NOT EASILY SATIATED. I BEG OF YOU TO GIVE ME MY FILL OF FOOD THIS ONCE.

"ARJUNA AND KRISHNA REPLIED:

O BRAHMANA, TELL US WHAT FOOD WILL GIVE YOU CONTENTMENT AND WE SHALL STRIVE TO PROCURE IT.

"THE BRAHMANA SAID:

I DO NOT PARTAKE OF ORDINARY FOOD. I AM AGNI. I NEED FOOD THAT BEFITS ME.

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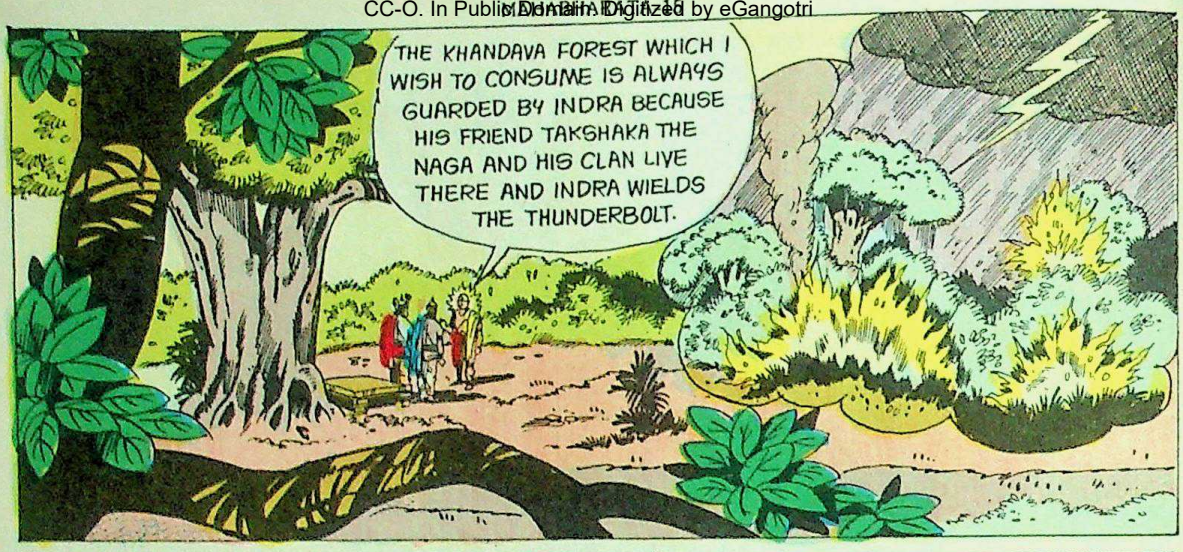

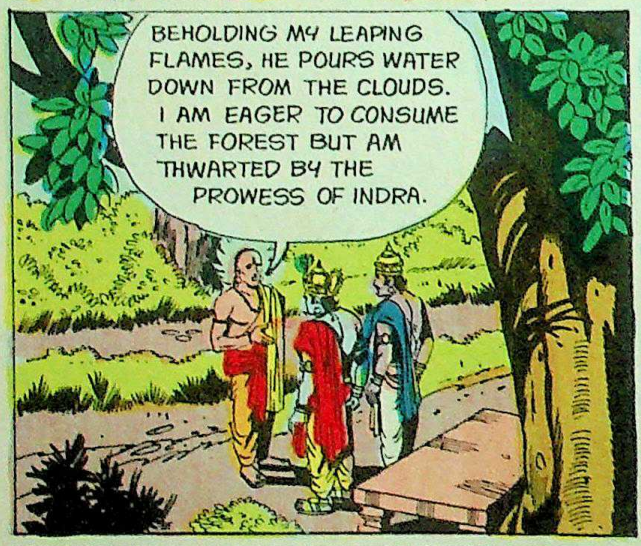

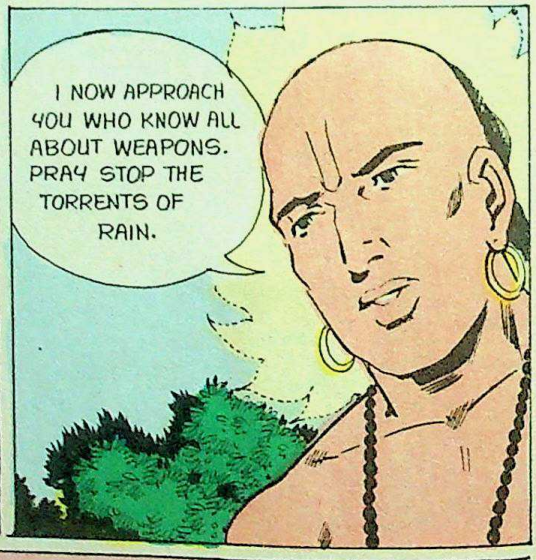

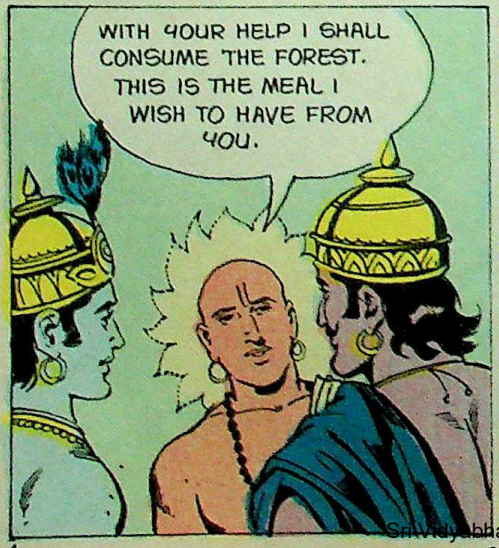

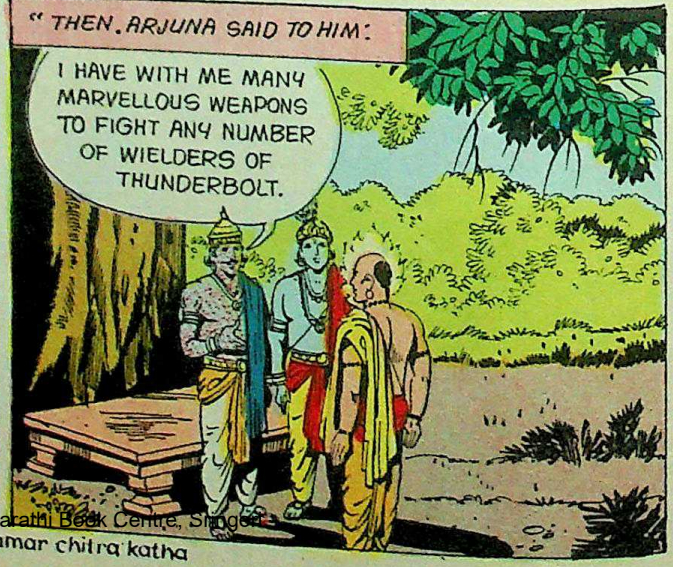

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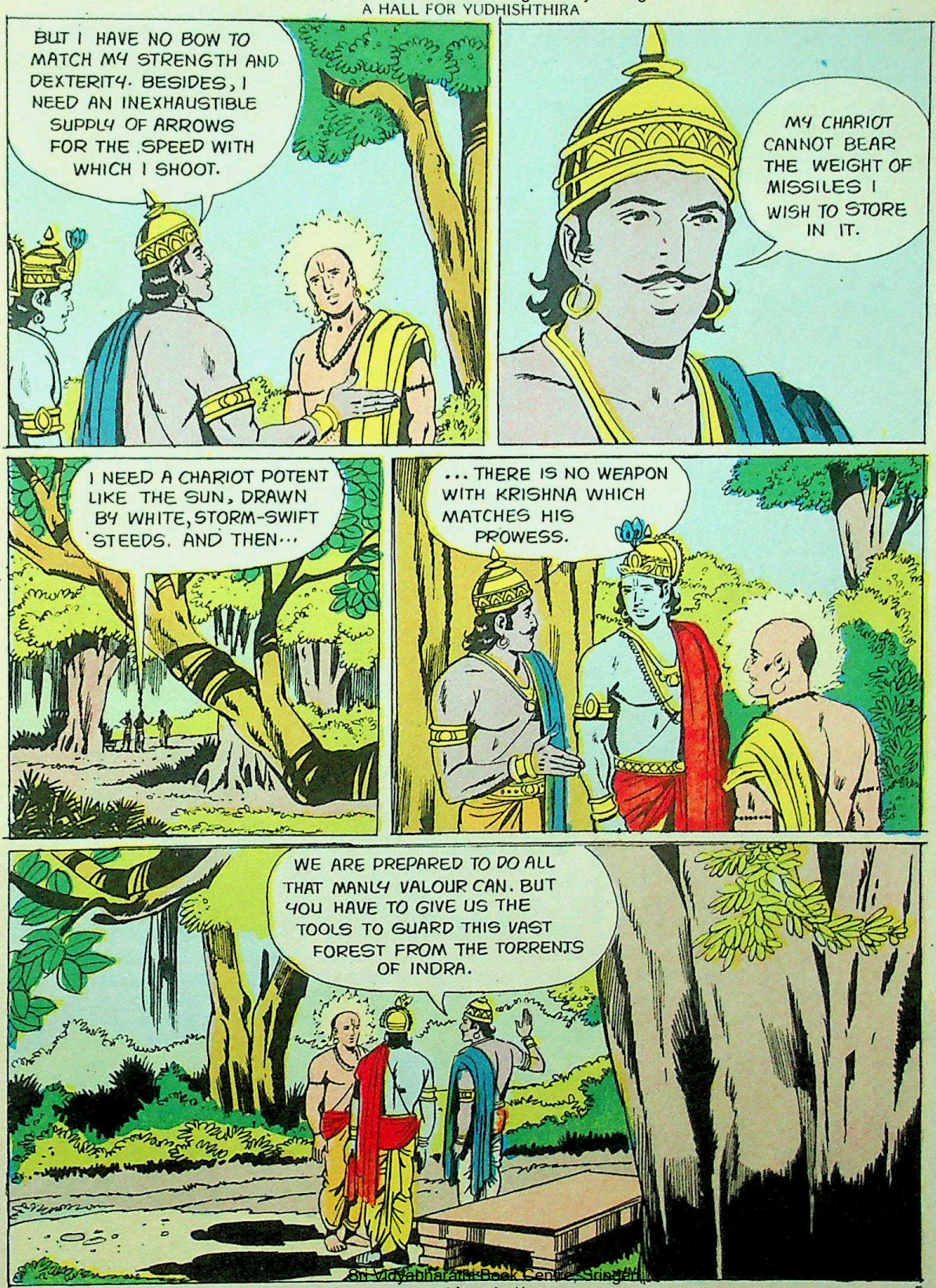

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THUS ADDRESSED BY ARJUNA, AGNI THOUGHT OF VARUNA, THE PRESIDING DEITY OF WATER AND A GUARDIAN OF THE UNIVERSE.

" AND VARUNA, DIVINING HIS THOUGHT, LOST NO TIME IN APPEARING BEFORE AGNI...

"...WHO SAID TO HIM:

HASTEN AND GIVE ME THE BOW, THE EVERFULL QUIVER, AND THE CHARIOT MARKED BY ITS BANNER CARRYING THE EMBLEM OF THE APE— ALL GIVEN TO YOU BY THE KING SOMA.

ARJUNA WITH THAT GANDEEVA BOW WILL ACCOMPLISH A GREAT DEED AND SO WILL KRISHNA WITH THE DISCUS.

VARUNA, O MONARCH, THEN GAVE THAT MIRACULOUS AND UNASSAILABLE BOW WHICH WAS AS POTENT AS THOUSANDS OF BOWS AND WAS REVERED BY THE CELESTIALS.

HE ALSO GAVE AN INEXHAUSTIBLE QUIVER AND A FULLY EQUIPPED CHARIOT DISTINGUISHED BY ITS BANNER THAT HAD THE EMBLEM OF THE APE. YOKED TO THE CHARIOT WERE STEEDS THAT WERE AS WHITE AS SPOTLESS CLOUDS.

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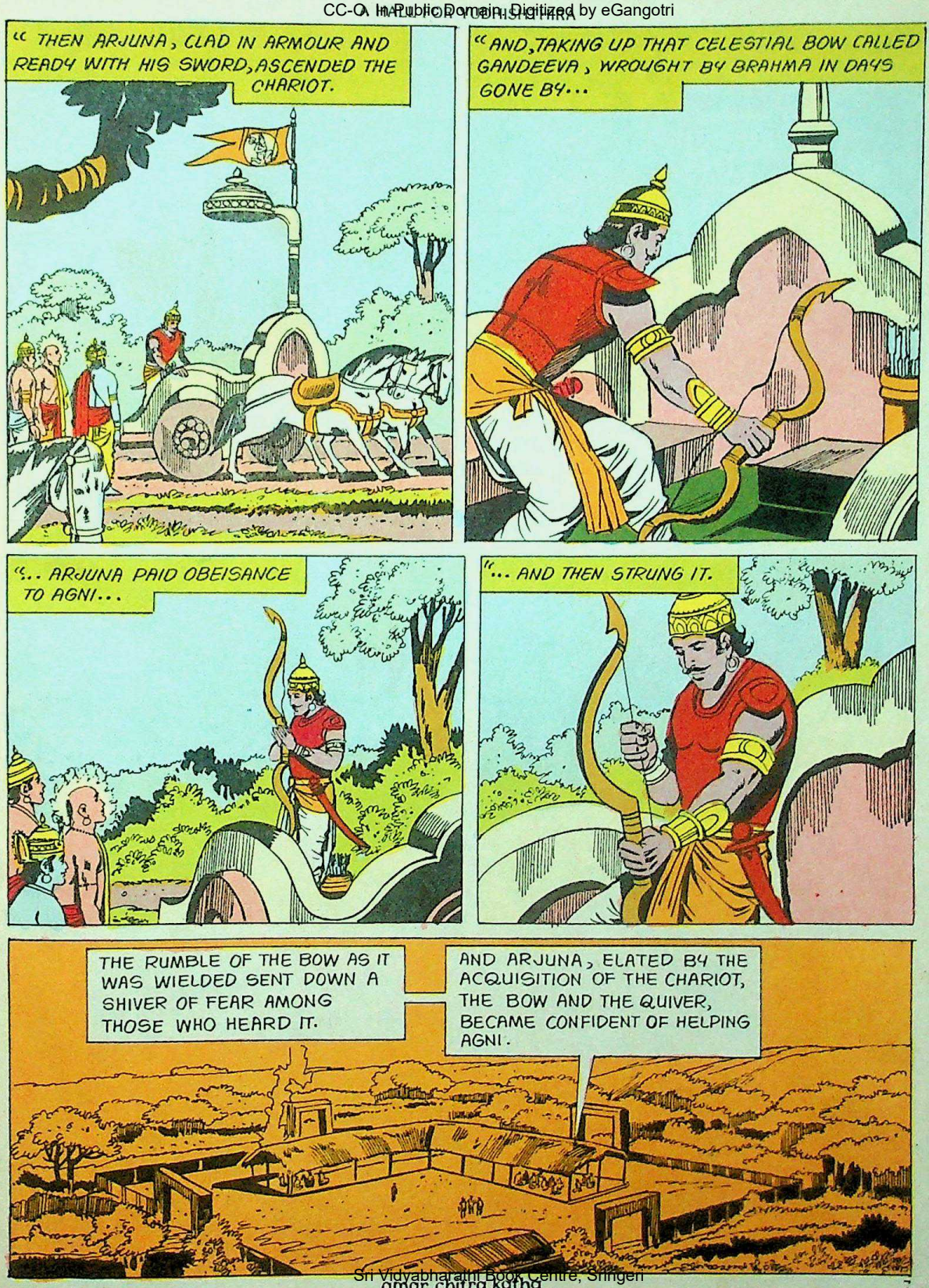

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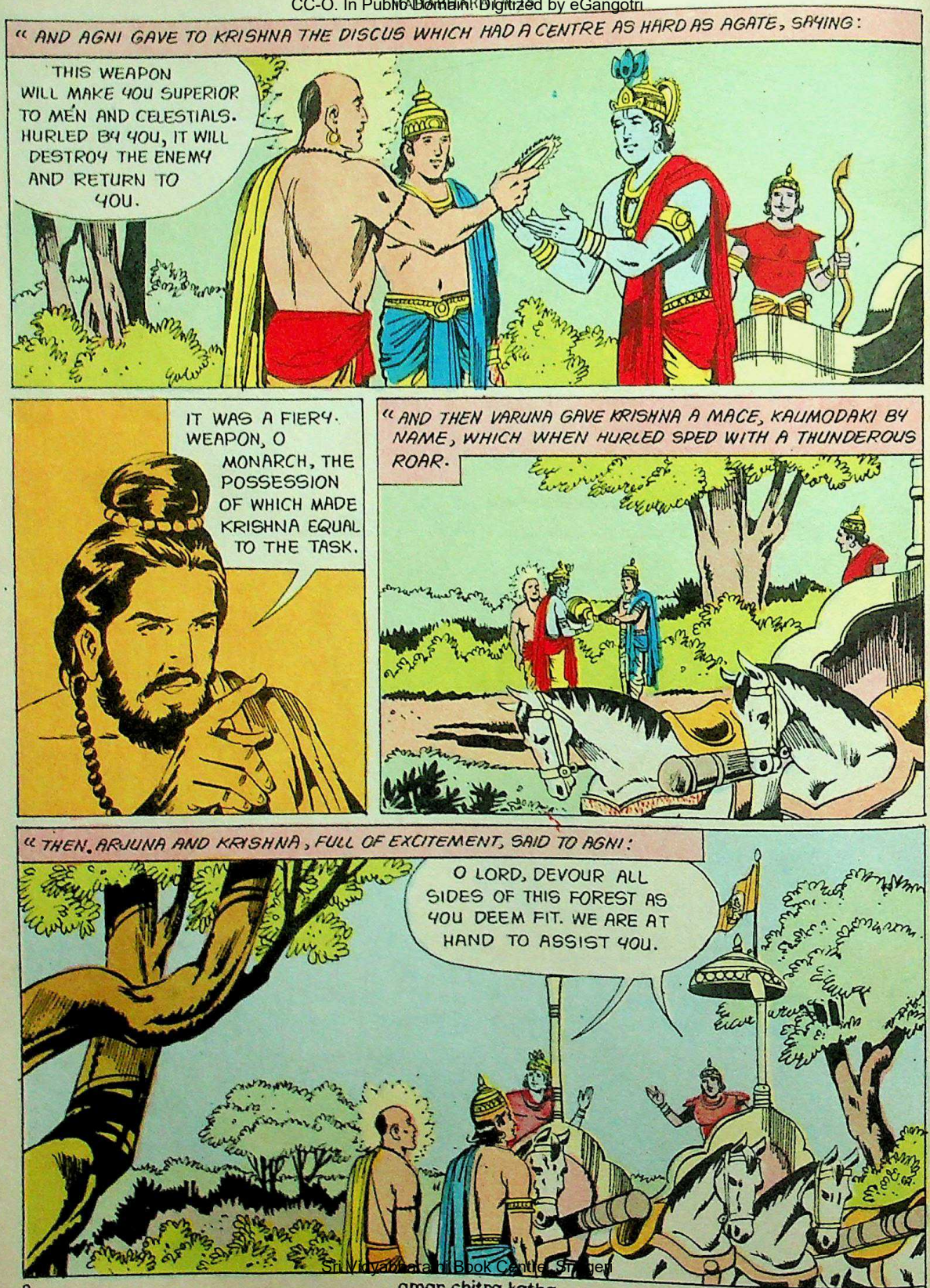

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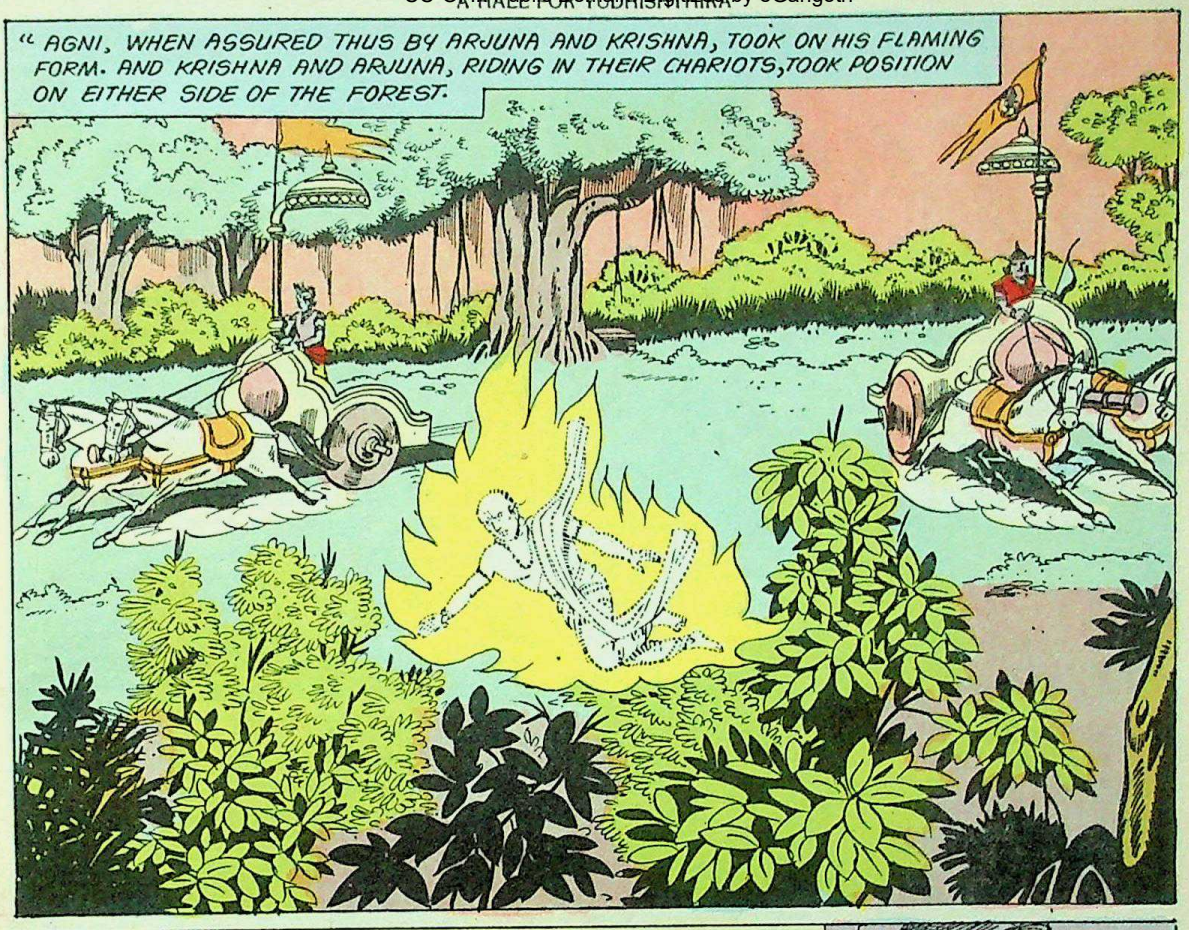

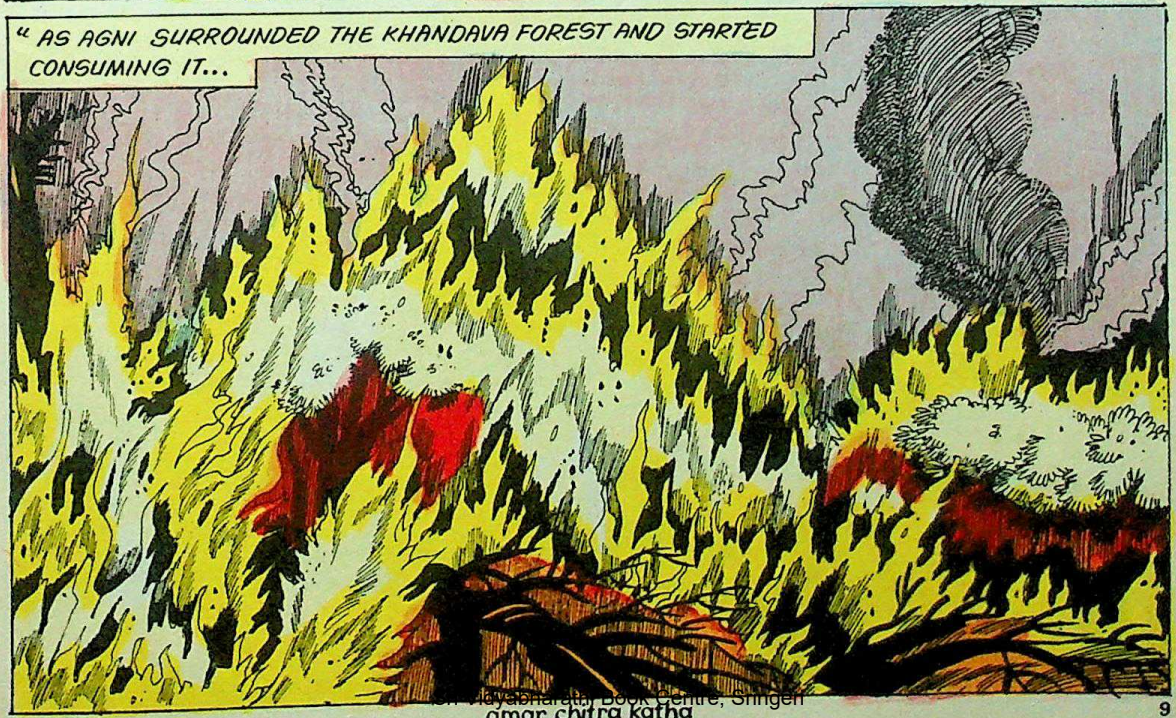

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"... THE WATER-SPOTS BEGAN TO BOIL AND THE LEAPING FLAMES ROSE UP TO THE SKY...

"... STRIKING FEAR INTO THE HEARTS OF THE CELESTIALS.

"THEN THOSE IN THE REALMS ABOVE WENT TO INDRA AND SAID:

O LORD, WHY IS AGNI BURNING UP ALL THOSE CREATURES? IS THE WORLD NEARING ITS DAY OF DOOM?

"WHEN INDRA HEARD THIS AND BEHELD FOR HIMSELF THE EVENT, O MONARCH, HE COVERED THE SKIES WITH MULTITUDINOUS CLOUDS. AND THOSE CLOUDS AMASSED AND COMMANDED BY INDRA...

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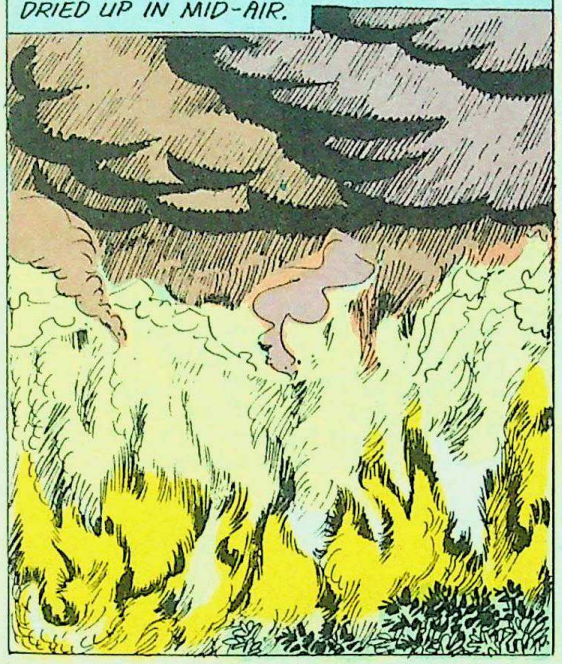
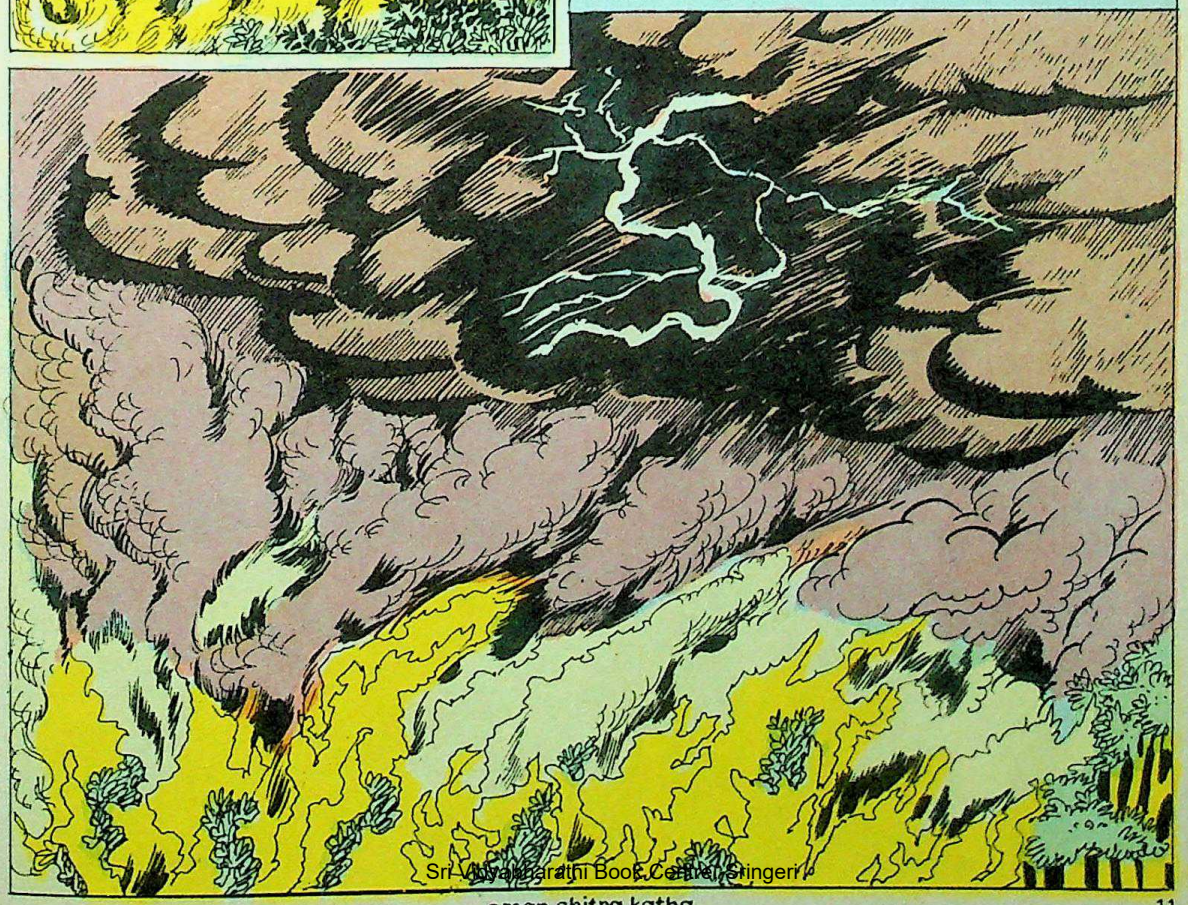
"... BEGAN RAINING DOWN UPON THE KHANDAVA FOREST IN SHOWERS AS THICK AS THE AXLE-RODS OF A CHARIOT. BUT IN THE SCORCHING HEAT OF THE FIRE, THE CASCADES DRIED UP IN MID-AIR.



"AN ENRAGED INDRA GATHERED MORE MASSIVE CLOUDS FOR...

"... A HEAVIER DOWNPOUR. THE ENCOUNTER OF THE RUSHING WATER WITH THE BLAZE FILLED THE FOREST WITH SMOKE AND THE FLASHES OF LIGHTNING TURNED IT TERRIBLE.



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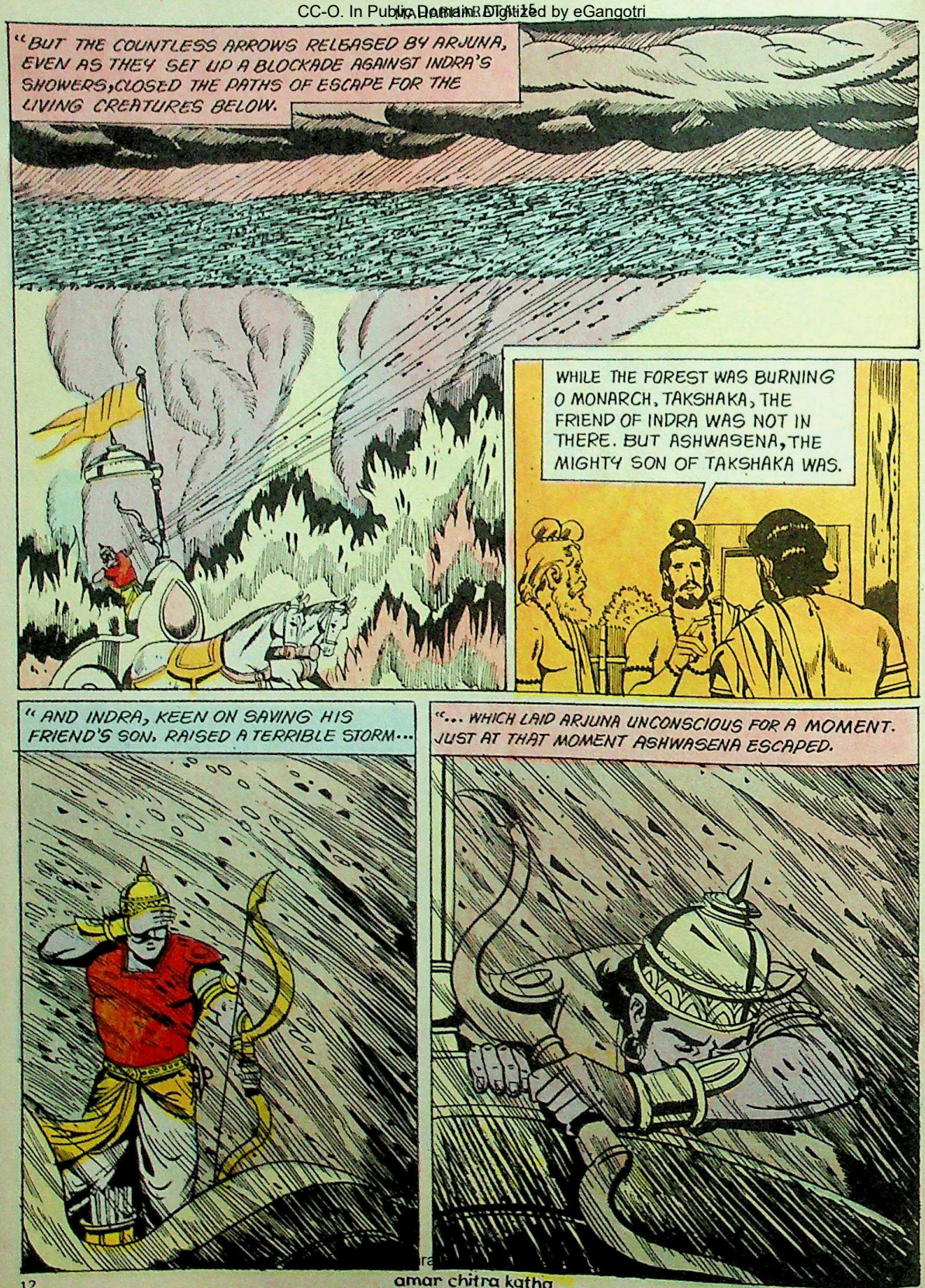

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"WHEN ARJUNA REALIZED HOW POTENT THE ILLUSION HAD BEEN, HE CURSED THE SLY SNAKE AS DID KRISHNA AND AGNI, SAYING:

NONE SHALL SPEAK WELL OF YOU.

"AND ARJUNA, PIQUED BY THE THOUGHT THAT HE HAD BEEN TRICKED, COVERED THE SKIES WITH ARROWS AND CARRIED THE FIGHT STRAIGHT TO INDRA."

AND INDRA, O MONARCH, SAW THE DETERMINATION OF ARJUNA AND HURLED HIS FIERCE WEAPONS, COVERING THE VERY FIRMAMENT COMPLETELY.

"THEN THERE AROSE HOWLING GALES THAT STIRRED UP THE OCEANS...

"...AND CREATED BILLOWING CLOUDS RICH WITH MOISTURE.

"AND THOSE CLOUDS EMITTED THUNDER AND LIGHTNING.

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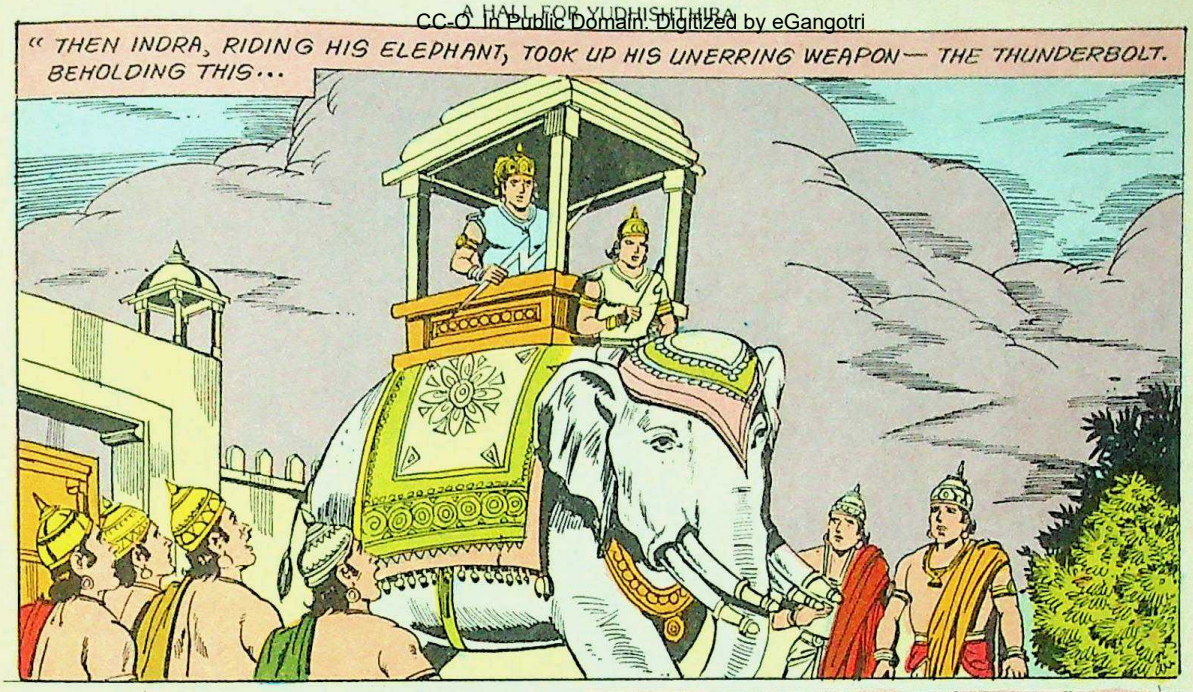

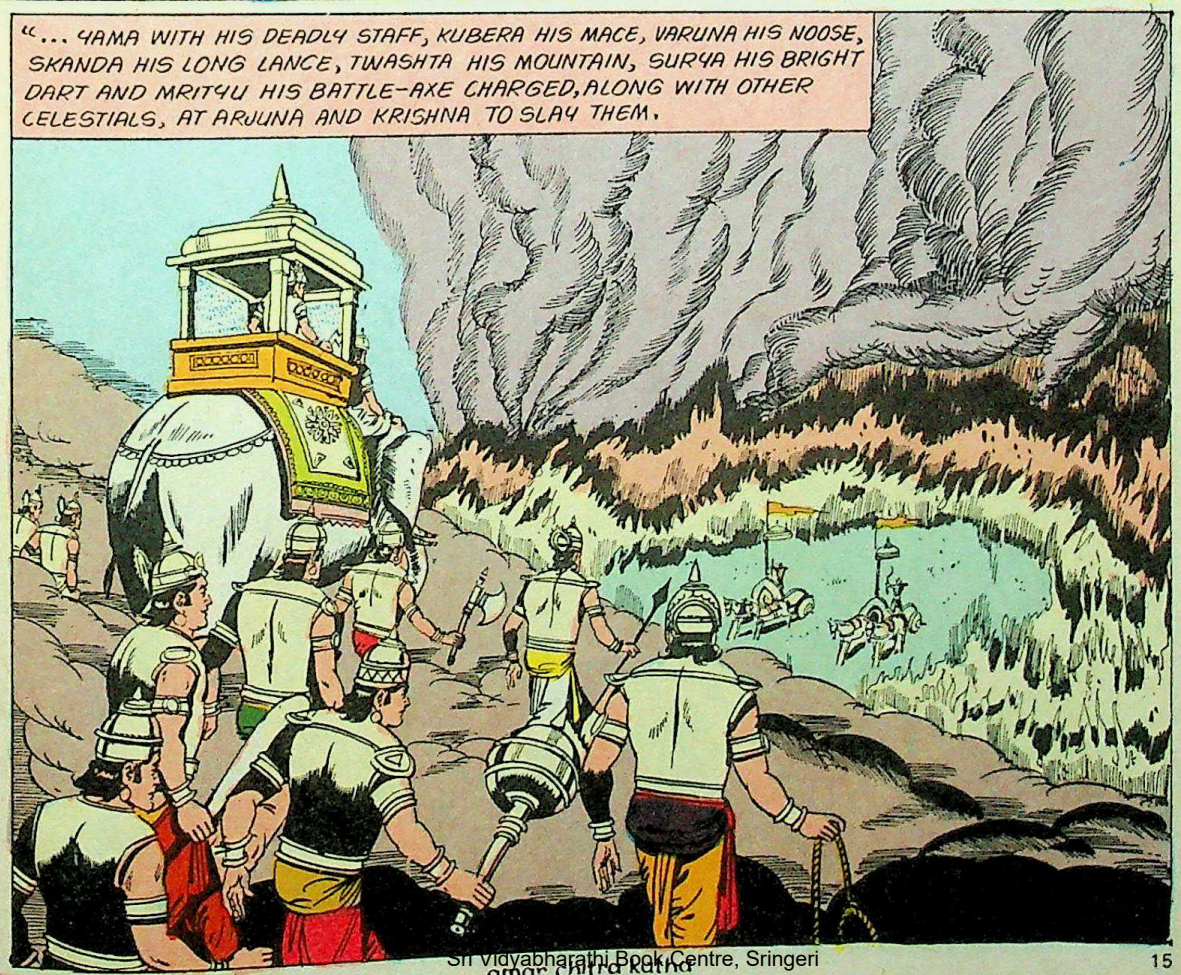

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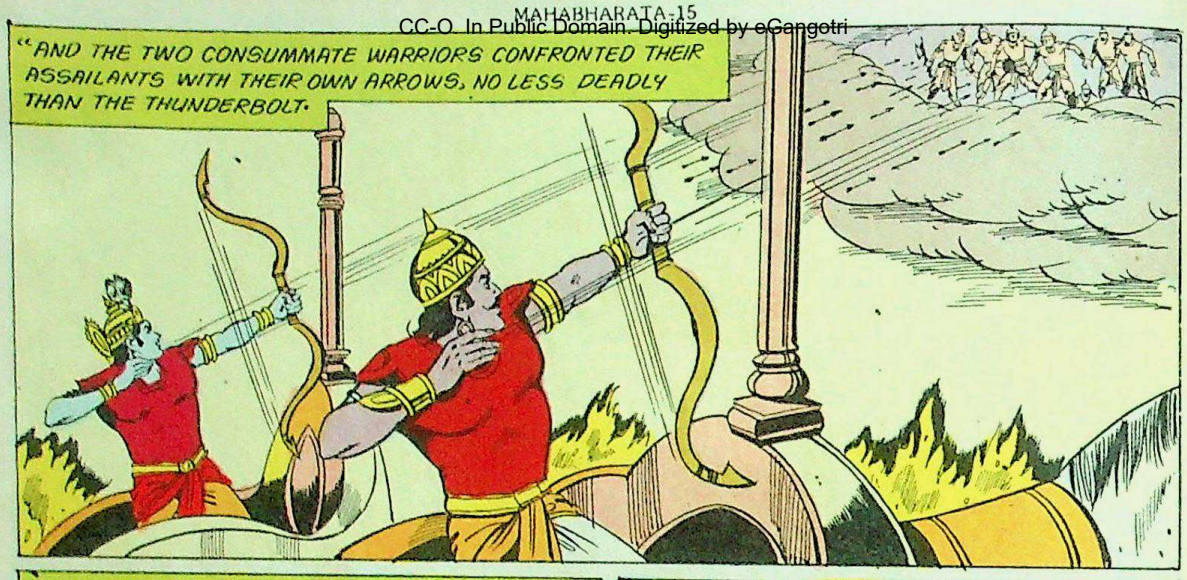

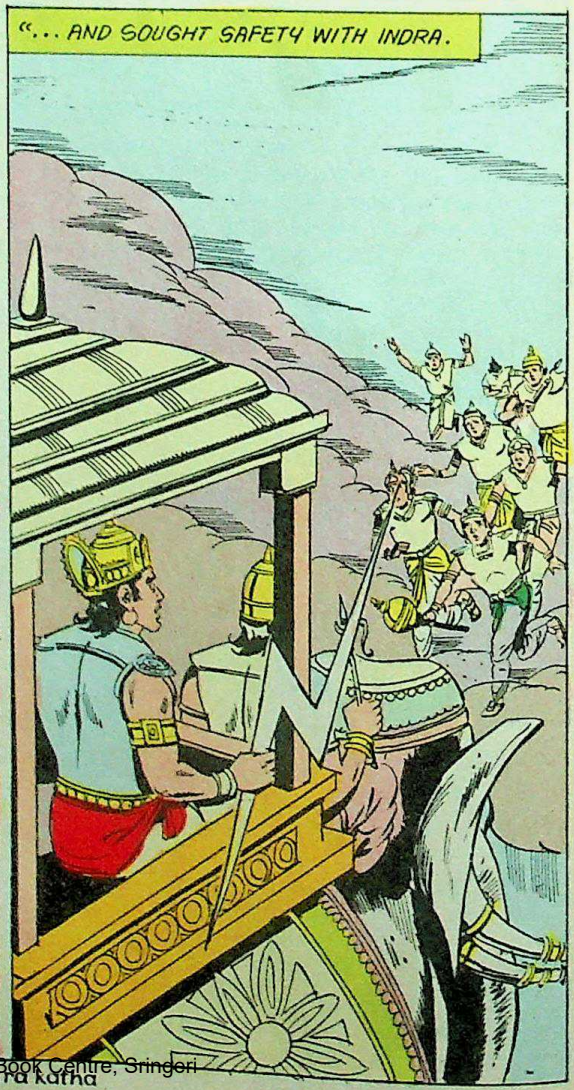

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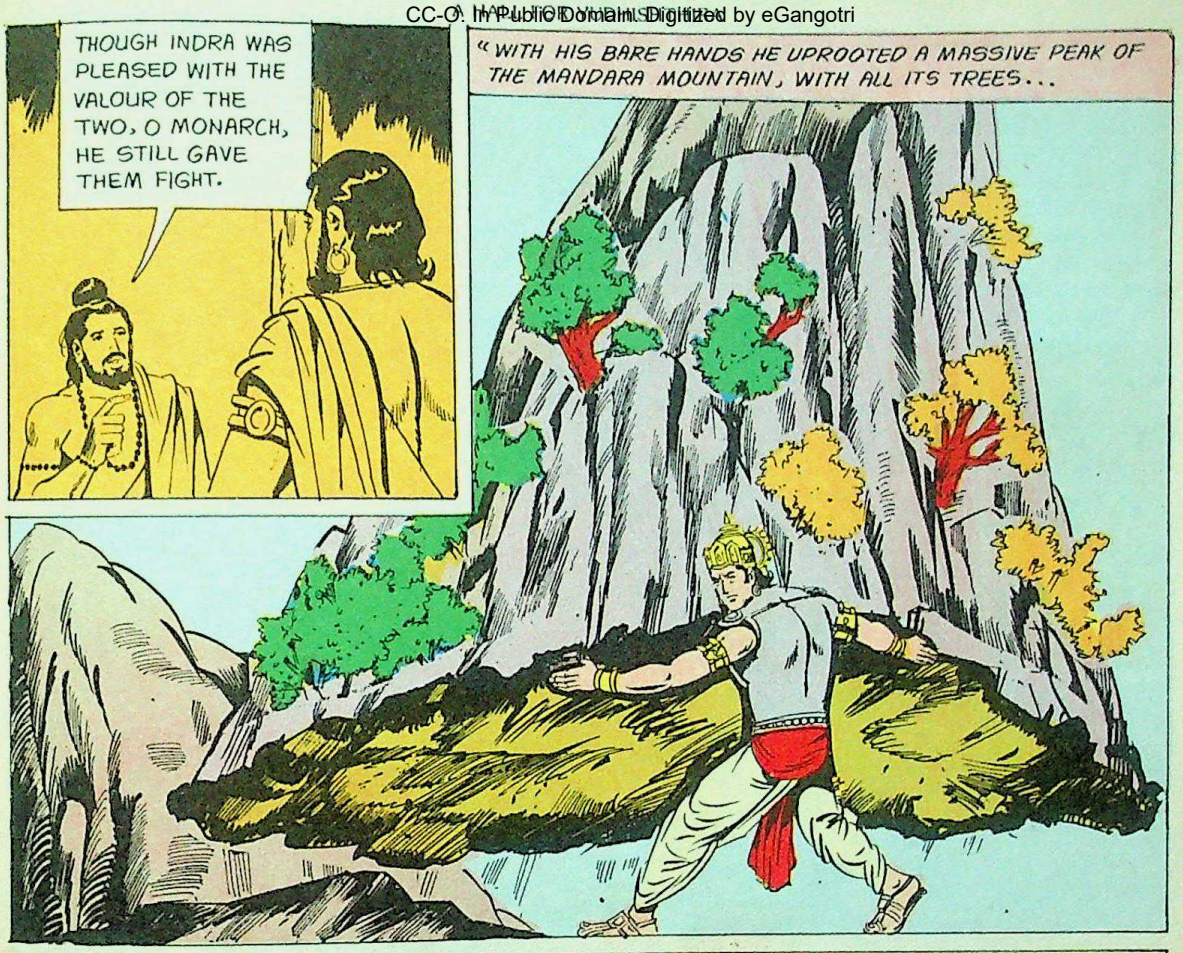

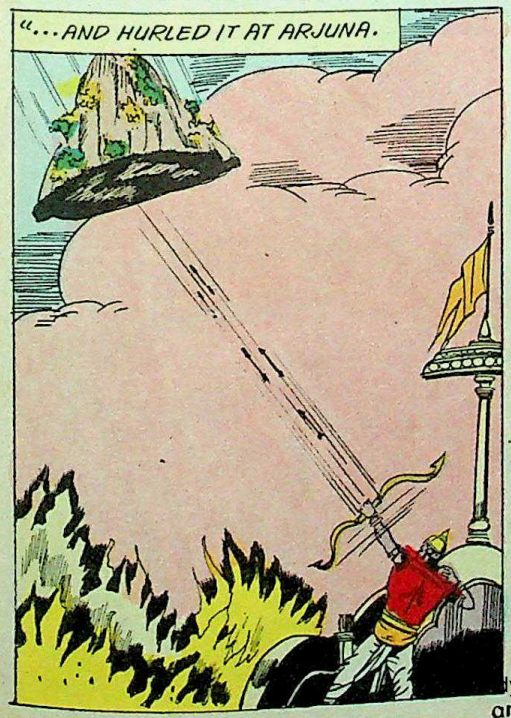

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O MONARCH, THE FRAGMENTS OF THAT MOUNTAIN AS THEY CAME PLUNGING DOWN WERE LIKE THE SUN AND THE MOON AND THE PLANETS FALLING DOWN FROM THEIR ORBITS.

"THEN A VOICE, DEEP AND GRAVE, ADDRESSED ITSELF TO INDRA AND SAID:

YOUR FRIEND TAKSHAKA IS NOT IN THERE. KHANDAVA IS FATED TO BE BURNT. KNOW KRISHNA AND ARJUNA TO BE INVINCIBLE IN BATTLE. THEREFORE IT IS PROPER THAT YOU TURN BACK WITH RETINUE.

"THEN THE CELESTIALS, BEHOLDING INDRA RETRACING HIS STEPS...

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"... FOLLOWED HIM WITH THEIR SOLDIERS, TO THE ACCOMPANIMENT OF THE TRIUMPHANT LEONINE ROAR OF KRISHNA AND ARJUNA.

"IT WAS THEN THAT KRISHNA PERCEIVED AN ASURA, MAYA BY NAME, MAKING HIS ESCAPE FROM TAKSHAKA'S ABODE. AGNI IN HIS CORPOREAL FORM, FOLLOWED INTENT ON CONSUMING THE ASURA.

"KRISHNA STOOD READY WITH HIS DISCUS TO SLAY HIM. SEEING THE RAISED DISCUS...

"... AND THE PURSUING AGNI, MAYA SAID:

ARJUNA! COME QUICK AND SAVE ME!

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"ARJUNA HEARD HIS FRIGHTENED VOICE AND SAID:

FEAR NOT!

"AND MAYA WAS NOT HARMED BY KRISHNA OR DEVOURED BY AGNI BECAUSE HE WAS GRANTED ASYLUM BY ARJUNA.

AND, O MONARCH, AGNI CONSUMED THE KHANDAVA FOREST FOR A WHOLE FORTNIGHT FREE FROM THE FEAR OF INDRA AND SECURE UNDER THE MIGHT OF ARJUNA AND KRISHNA.

"THEN INDRA DESCENDED TO EARTH WITH ALL HIS RETINUE...

"... AND SAID TO ARJUNA AND KRISHNA:

I AM PLEASED WITH YOU WHO HAVE ACCOMPLISHED A DEED HARD FOR EVEN THE CELESTIALS. ASK FOR A BOON SELDOM GRANTED TO MEN.

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"ARJUNA ASKED HIM FOR VARIOUS MARVELLOUS WEAPONS AND INDRA APPOINTED THE TIME FOR GIVING THEM SAYING:

IN TIMES TO COME, WHEN MAHADEVA'S GRACE FALLS ON YOU, THEN SHALL I GIVE YOU ALL MY WEAPONS.

"THEN KRISHNA, O MONARCH, ASKED THAT HIS FRIENDSHIP WITH ARJUNA BE ETERNAL. INDRA GRANTED HIM THAT BOON AND THEN, AFTER SPEAKING TO AGNI, RETURNED TO HIS HEAVENLY ABODE WITH HIS COMPANIONS.

"AND AGNI SAID TO ARJUNA AND KRISHNA:

I HAVE BEEN SERVED WELL BY BOTH OF YOU. NOW YOU MAY GO WHEREVER YOU CHOOSE TO.

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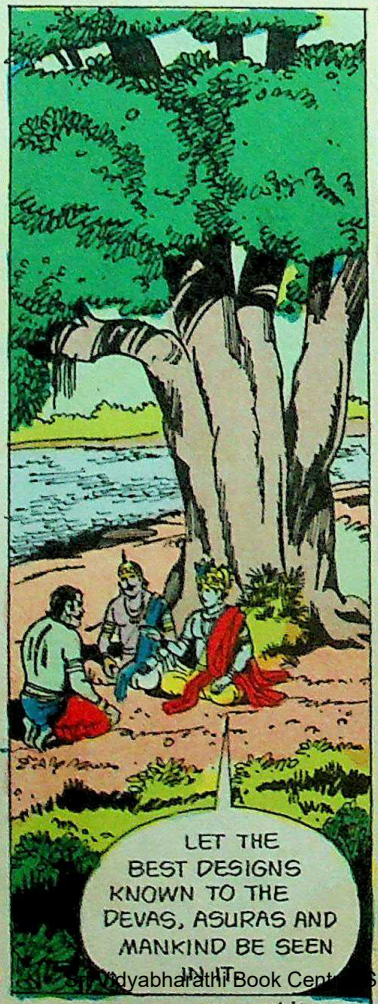

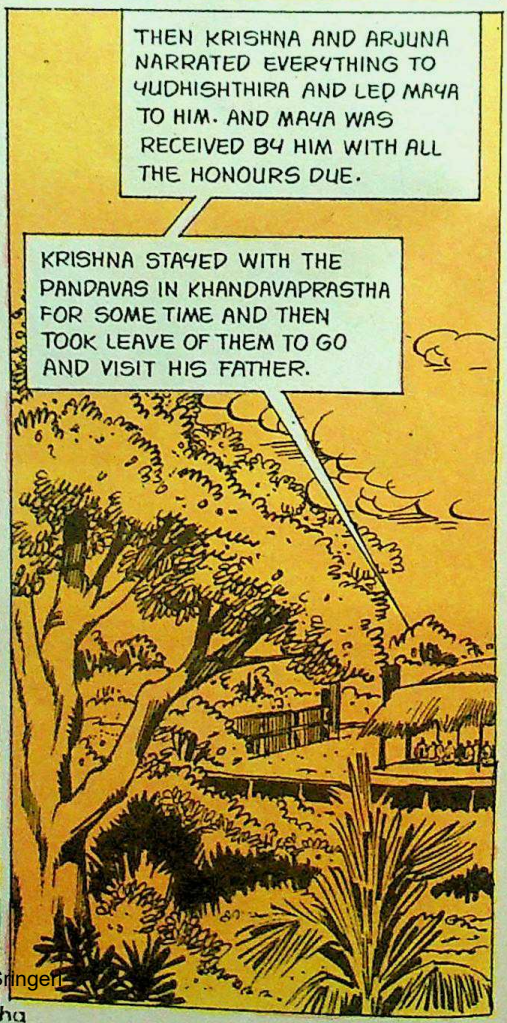

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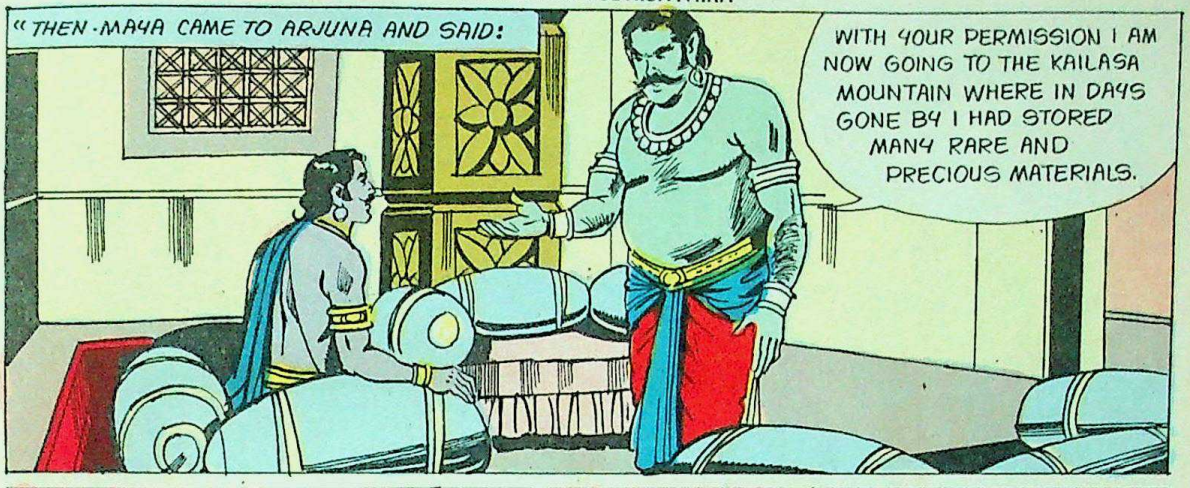

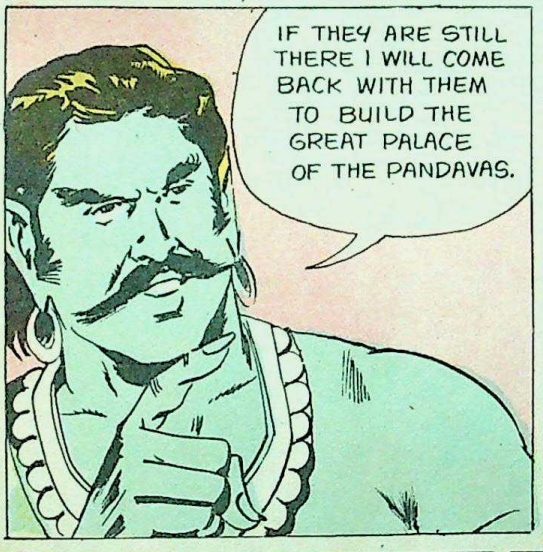

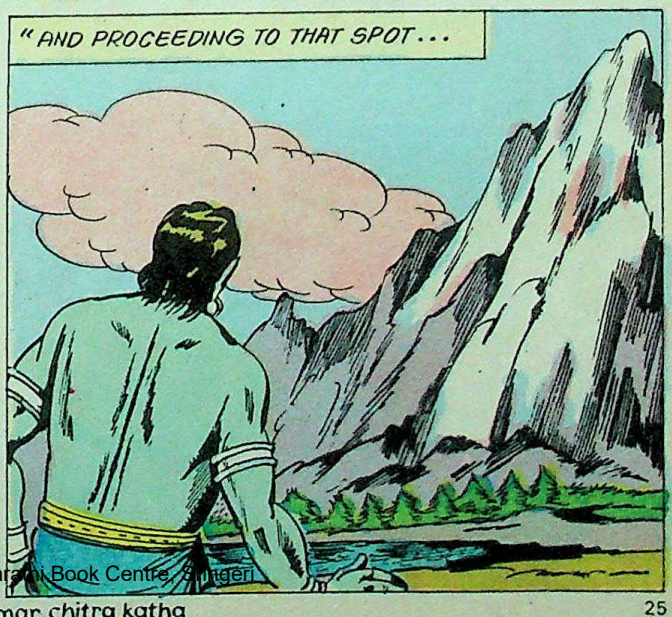

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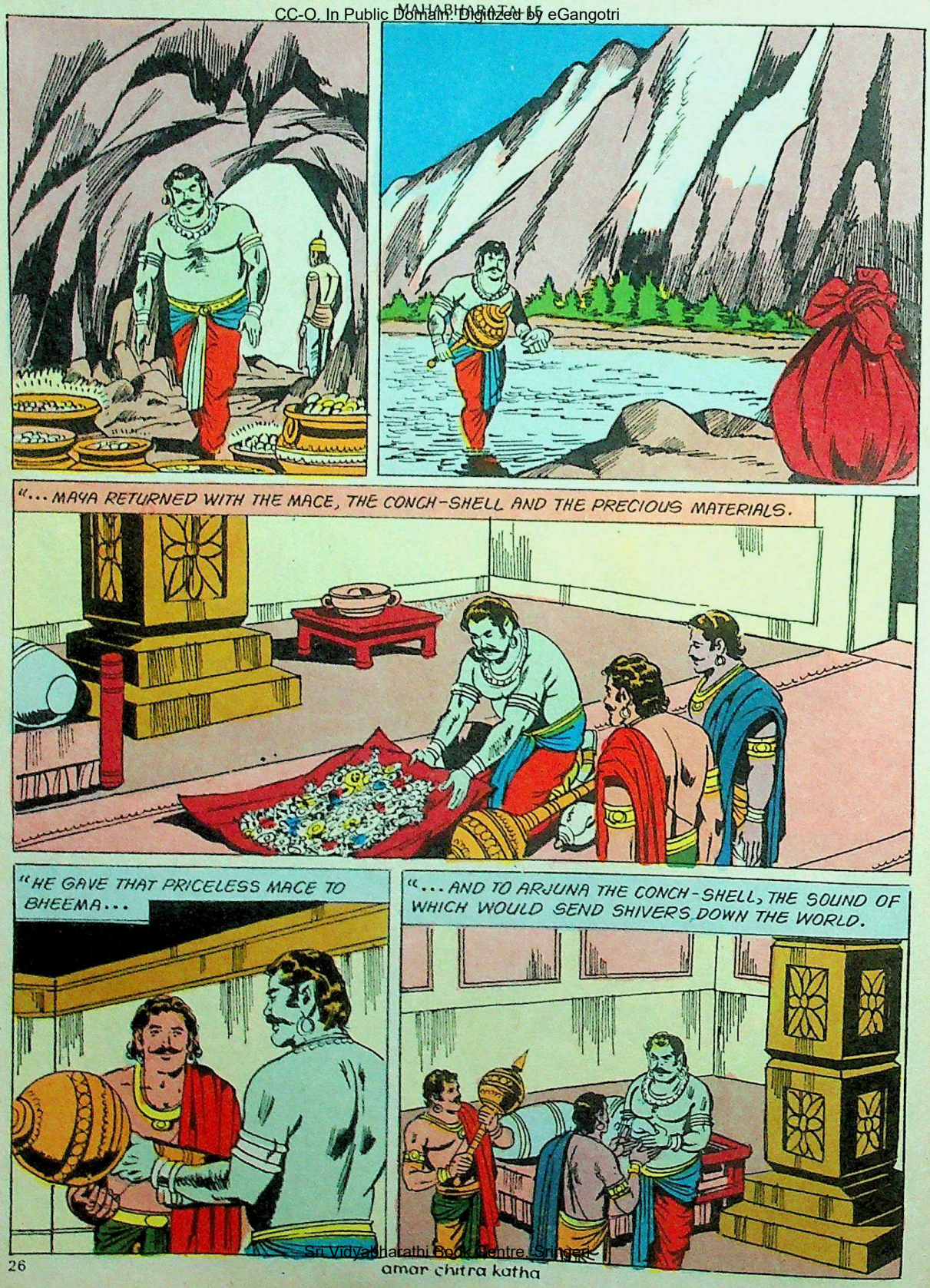

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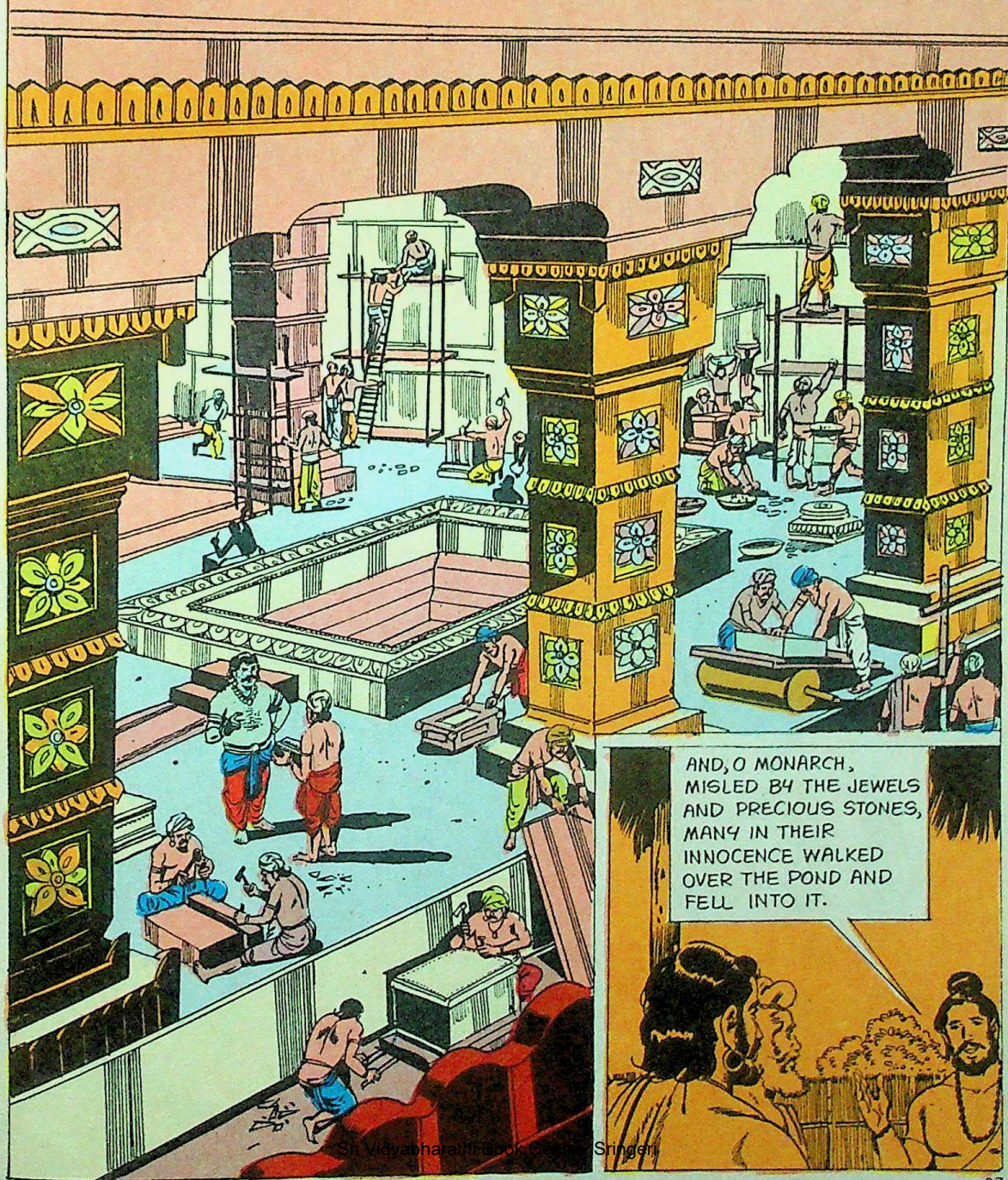
A HALL FOR YUDHISHTHIRA

"AND THEN HE STARTED BUILDING THE INIMITABLE PALACE WITH COLUMNS OF GOLD AND WALLS ENCRUSTED WITH PRECIOUS STONES AND WHICH OCCUPIED AN AREA OF FIVE THOUSAND SQUARE CUBITS.* WITHIN THE PALACE GROUNDS MAYA DESIGNED A POND, THE BANKS OF WHICH WERE SET IN MARBLE SLABS DECORATED WITH PEARLS. A FLIGHT OF CRYSTAL STEPS LED ONE FROM THE BANKS TO THE WATER WHICH WAS TRANSPARENTLY CLEAR. HE PLACED IN THE WATER, LOTUSES MADE OF DARK HUGE GEMS WITH STALKS OF BRIGHT JEWELS; AND FISH AND WATER-BIRDS AND TORTOISES.



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* ONE CUBIT IS EQUAL TO 45 TO 56 CENTIMETRES

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IN MAGNIFICENCE, THE HUGE PALACE WITH ITS BEJEWELLED ARCHWAYS AND PROFUSELY DECORATED WALLS, SURPASSED THE MANSION OF BRAHMA HIMSELF. THERE WERE EIGHT THOUSAND RAKSHASAS CALLED "KINKARAS" TO GUARD AND PRESERVE THE PALACE.

MAYA COMPLETED THIS WORK IN FOURTEEN MONTHS AND INFORMED YUDHISHTHIRA OF IT.

THEN DID YUDHISHTHIRA MAKE HIS CEREMONIAL ENTRY AND ALONG WITH HIS BROTHERS LIVE A HAPPY LIFE LIKE INDRA IN HIS HEAVENLY ABODE.

"THEN ONE DAY WHILE THE PANDAVAS WERE IN ASSEMBLY IN THE PALACE...

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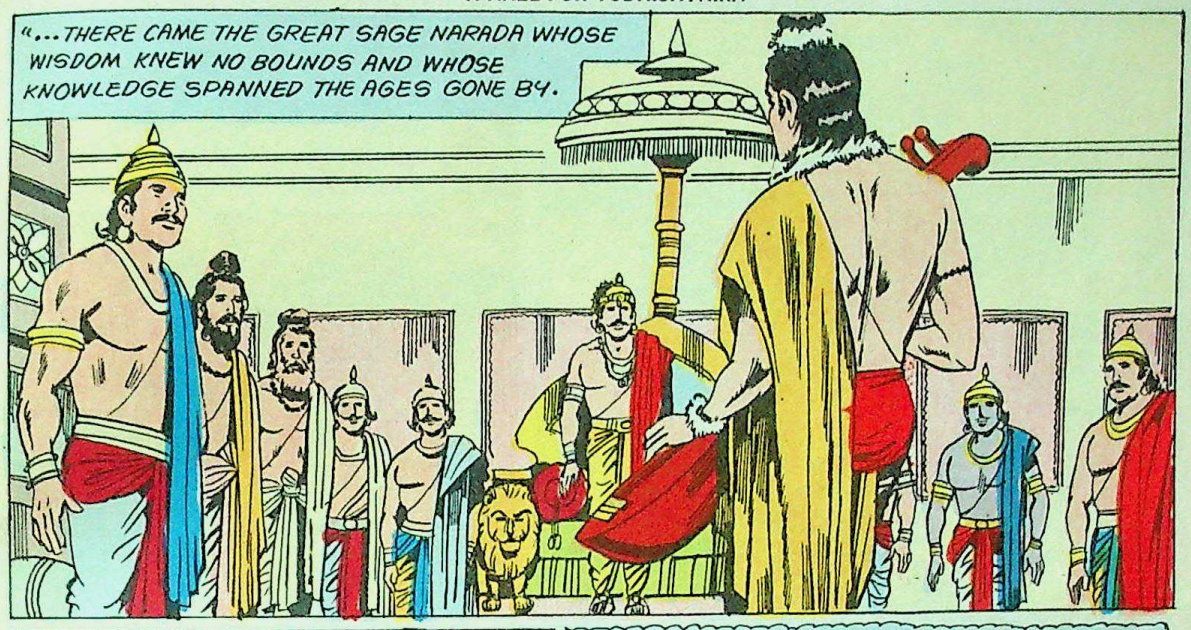

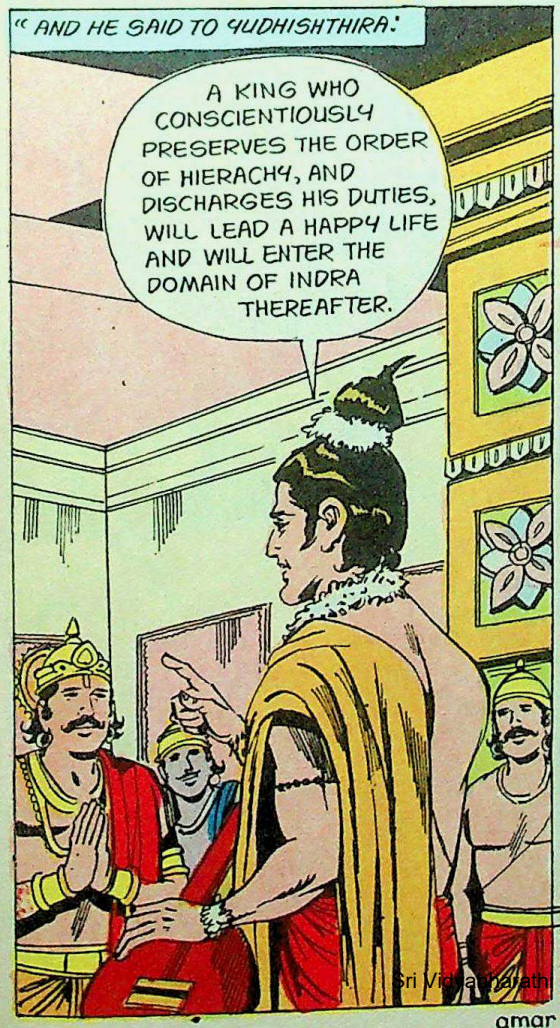

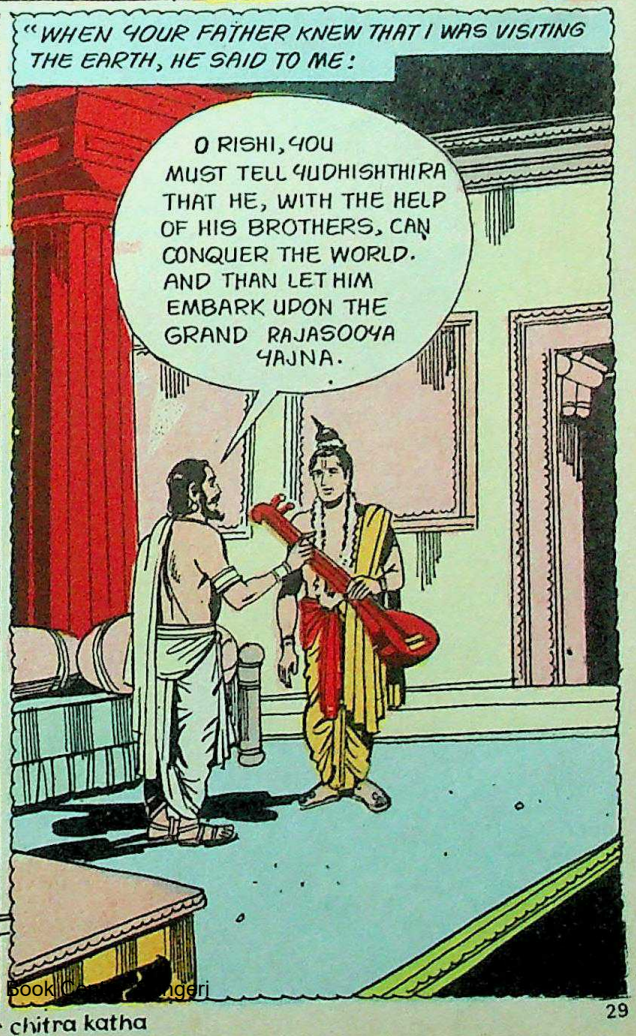

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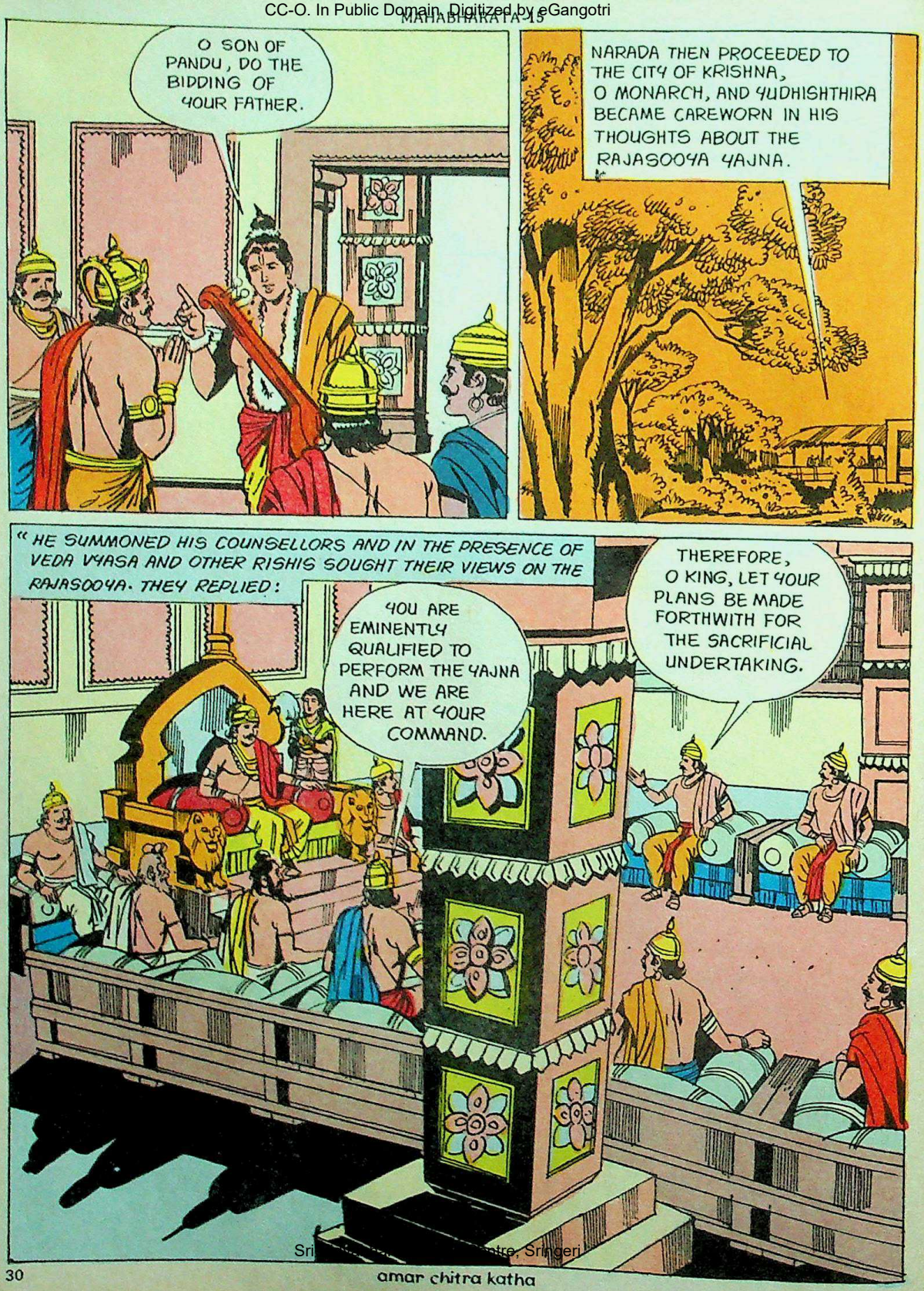

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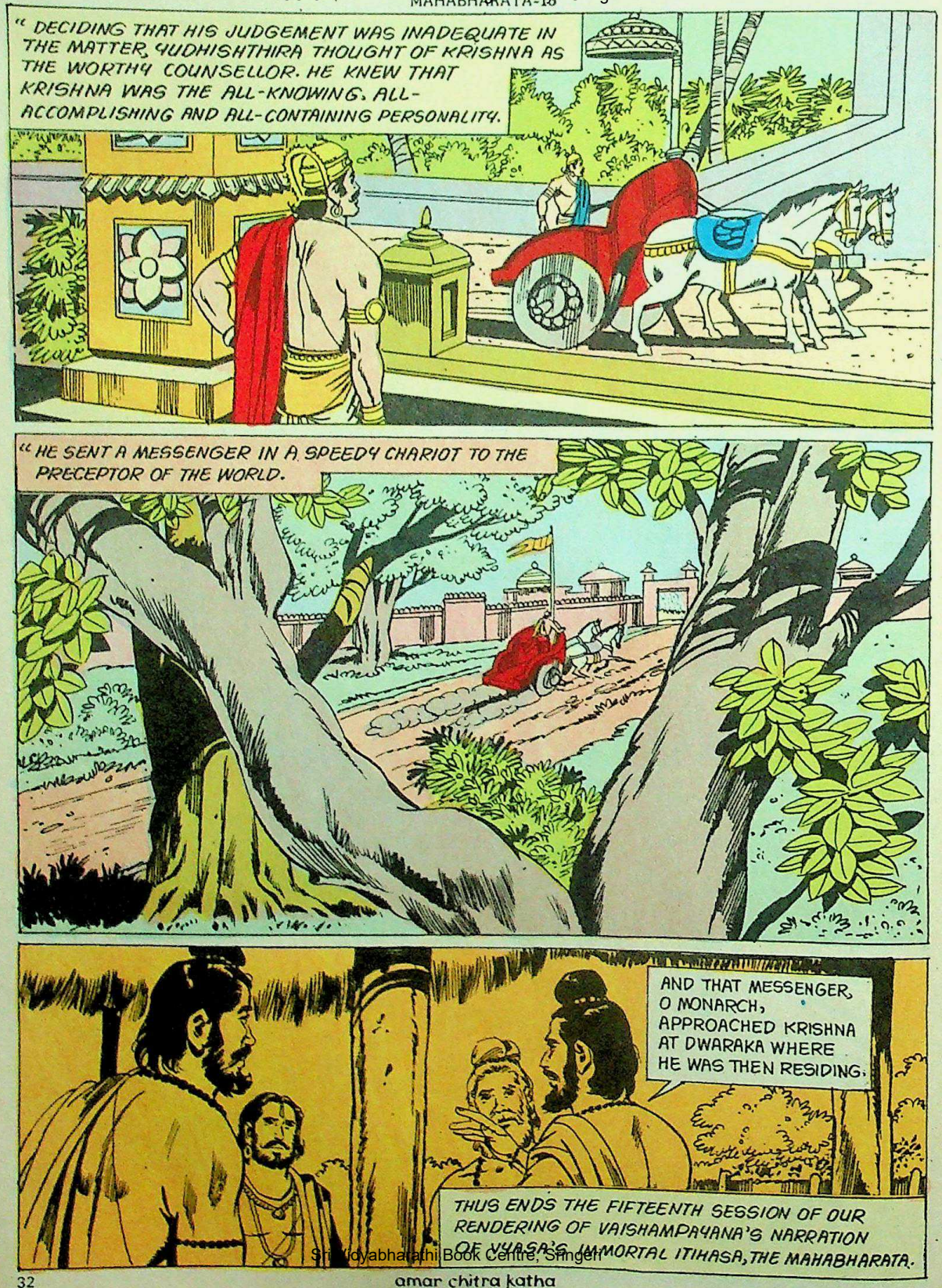

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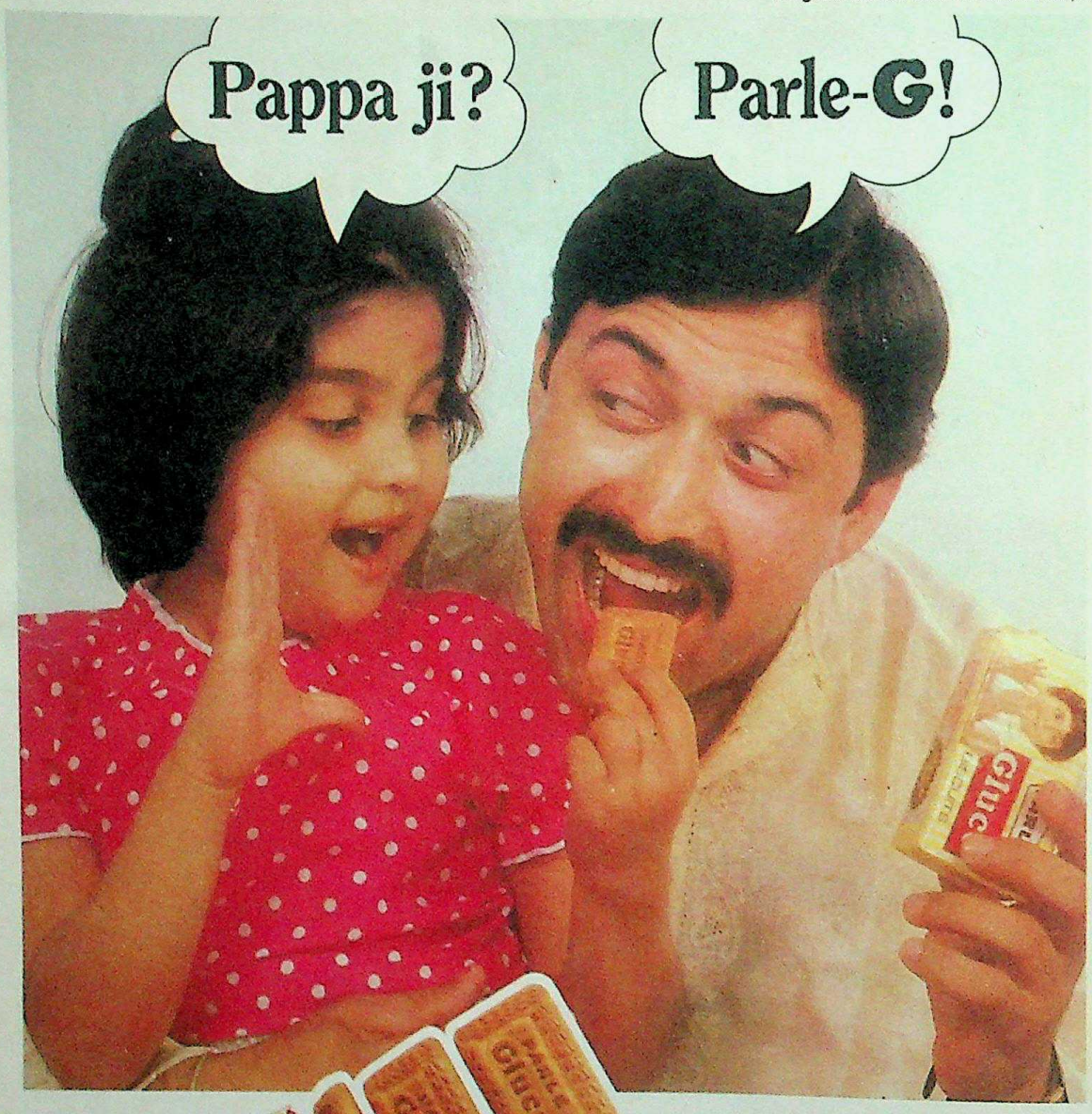

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